

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Paul Addison is a Reader in History at the University of Edinburgh and the author of *New War is Over*, 1985.

Charles Boyle's collection of poems *House of Cards* was published in 1982.

Philip Brady is Reader in German at Birkbeck College, London.

John Buxton is Reader Emeritus in English Literature at the University of Oxford. His book, *Elizabethan Taste*, 1963, was reissued in 1983.

Peter Byrne is a lecturer in the Philosophy of Religion at King's College, London.

Jorge Calado is Professor of Chemical Engineering at Cornell University and a Visiting Professor of Physical Chemistry at the Technical University of Lisbon.

Lesley Chamberlain's *Food and Cooking of Russia* was published in 1982.

Peter Clarke's *Literary and Social Democrats*, 1981, is now available in paperback.

Linda Colley's *In Defence of Oligarchy: The Tory Party 1714-60* was published in 1982.

Peter Conrad is the author of *The Everyman History of English Literature*, which was published last year.

Nell Corcoran has recently completed a study of Seamus Heaney. He lectures in English at the University of Sheffield.

Pietro Corra's study of Lamarek, *Oltre il mito: Lamarek e le scienze naturali del suo tempo* was published in 1983.

C. R. Dodwell is Head of the History of Art Department at the University of Manchester and the Director of the Whitworth Art Gallery. Among his works is *Anglo-Saxon Art: A new perspective*, 1982.

Lucy Ellmann is a regular contributor to *Arts Review*.

Howard Erskine-Hill's books include *The Angolan Idea in English Literature*, 1983.

David Fallows is a lecturer in Music at the University of Manchester.

Roy Foster is the author of *Lord Randolph Churchill: A political life*, 1981.

Alasdair Gray's recent novel *The Fall of Kelvin Walker*, 1985, has just been reissued in paperback.

John A. C. Greppin is Professor of Linguistics at Cleveland State University and the Editor of the *Journal of Armenian Linguistics*.

Paul Griffiths is the author of *The Thames and Hudson Encyclopedia of 20th Century Music*, which will be published later this year.

J. T. Hooker is Reader in Greek and Latin in the University of London.

T. W. Hutcheon is the author of *The Philosophy and Politics of Economics*, 1981.

Mick Imlah is the Editor of *Poetry Review*.

Hugh Kennedy is the author of *The Early Abbasid Caliphate: A political history*, 1981.

J. R. Maddox is a Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, and the author of *Thomas of Lancaster 1307-22*, 1971.

Adam Mars-Jones's collection of stories, *Lantern Lecture*, was published in 1981.

Conor Cruise O'Brien was Editor-in-Chief of the *Observer* from 1978 to 1981.

Sean O'Brien's first book of poems, *The Indoor Park*, won a Somerset Maugham Award in 1984.

Anthony Padgen is writing a history of Spain and Italy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. His most recent book, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology*, was published in 1982. He is the editor of a volume of essays, *Political Languages in Early Modern Europe*, which is due out in September.

R. E. Pahl is Research Professor of Sociology at the University of Kent at Canterbury and is the author of *Divisions of Labour*, 1984.

David Pryce-Jones's novel, *The Afternoon Sun*, has just been published.

Frederic Raphael's most recent novel, *Heaven and Earth*, was published last year.

David Seidman is the author of a forthcoming history of *The New Republic's* first thirty years.

Julian Symonds's *Bloody Murder*, 1972, has just been reissued in paperback.

E. S. Turner has been a contributor to *Punch* for fifty years.

John Turner is the editor of *Businessmen and Politics: Studies of business activity in British politics, 1900-1945*, 1984.

Stanley Uys was the London Editor of the South African Morning Newspapers group from 1977 to 1981.

Peter Warwick is the author of *Black People and the South African War 1899-1902*, 1983.

Stanley Wells is Joint General Editor of the Oxford Shakespeare. His *Re-editing Shakespeare for the Modern Reader* was published in 1984.

H. R. Woudhuysen is a lecturer in English at University College London; he is working on an edition of *Love's Labour's Lost* for the New Arden Series. His book, *Sidney's Texts*, will be published shortly.

The 1986 Neustadt International Prize for Literature has been awarded to Max Frisch. This biennial prize, established in 1969 and sponsored by the journal *World Literature Today*, has been dubbed the "Nobel Prize of the United States". The jury consisting of eleven prominent writers, critics and literary scholars from all over the world, each of whom had selected a different candidate for the award, gathered at the University of Oklahoma from February 27 to March 1. Max Frisch was the choice of Adolf Muschg; the runner-

up, Wole Soyinka, was the choice of Max Angelou.

The 1986 British Book Design and Production Exhibition will take place at the Foyles Gallery from September 16 to 27. The final date is publishers to submit entries is April 2. About 100 books are expected to be selected for exhibition with titles ranging from children's books to complicated technical treatises.

# TLS

## The Times Literary Supplement

FRIDAY 21 MARCH 1986 No 4,329 80p



**Whitman and the crisis of American democracy**  
**Ding Ling – putting the record straight**  
**Britain's post-war decline: Robert Skidelsky on a military historian's interpretation**  
**Tchaikovsky's travels; Mann on Wagner**  
**Politics and religion in Northern Ireland and Iran**  
**Fiction: Margaret Atwood, Robert Stone**

# TLS Classified

Rates: Classified Display – £9.65 p sec. Classified Linage – £1.90 per line. Minimum 3 lines – @ £5.70 Box number – £2.00.  
 Copy deadline: Classified display and Linage: Monday 10.00am in week of publication.

## Librarians

### IRELAND NATIONAL ARCHIVES

The Civil Service Commissioners invite applications for the position of Director (Designate).

The National Archives Legislation, at present before the Oireachtas, provides for the amalgamation of the State Paper and Public Record Offices as the National Archives. The Director (Designate) will initially be responsible for the State Paper and Public Record Offices and, on enactment of the legislation, will be formally appointed Director of the National Archives.

The appointee will be responsible for the development, control and management of the National Archives, involving the preservation, restoration, arrangement and description of archives, the acquisition of records and the provision of educational services. The appointee will also advise the Government and public service organisations on archival matters.

The successful applicant, who must be under 55 years of age, will have:

- \* a first or second class honours degree, or equivalent;
- \* a postgraduate qualification in archival studies or relevant to archival services;
- \* seven years' experience in archives, in a record office, library, research institute, or similar employment;
- \* experience in administration or management.

The successful applicant will be required to acquire a proficient knowledge of Irish.

Salary will be in the range IR£20,234-IR£23,617.

Application forms and full particulars are available from the Secretary, Civil Service Commission, 1 Lower Grand Canal Street, Dublin 2.

Latest date for the receipt of completed application forms: 10 April 1986.

### Isle of Wight COUNTY COUNCIL HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARIAN

An enthusiastic and responsible High School Librarian is required to run the modern Modern High School Library, Newport. The salary is work and provided is excellent and interest in information technology is desirable.

The successful applicant will be responsible for the County Library and will be required to give some assistance to the County Schools and Children's Library, mainly out of hours.

Salary: Scale 4/5 £8000-£9000 - starting salary according to experience.

### CHILDREN'S LIBRARIAN

Applications are invited from qualified Librarians with relevant experience for the post of the Local Library Librarian. We are looking for a young female to assist in the running of the library in its full and part time to other children's activities but the full time.

The successful applicant will be responsible for a busy central children's library in its full and part time to other children's activities but the full time.

The successful applicant will be responsible for a busy central children's library and will be closely involved with the County Schools and Children's Library.

Salary: Scale 4/5 £8000-£9000 - salary according to experience and qualifications.

FOR BOTH POSTS: Application Form and Job Description from the County Personnel Officer, Isle of Wight County Council, County Hall, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 1US. Telephone (0983) 524021.

## Awards

### THE EDGAR GRAHAM MEMORIAL PRIZE

The School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) invites submissions from publishers and authors for this book prize, given every two years for a published work on modern agricultural and industrial development in Asia and/or Africa.

The prize of around £1,000 will be next awarded in May 1986. Submissions should be made by 31 May 1986 of books in English published in the preceding two years.

Two copies of any work submitted should be sent to Miss Diana Matias, Editorial Secretary, SOAS, Malet Street, London WC1E 7BP (Tel. 01-637 2888).

## Books and Prints

BOOKFINDING 'OP and 2nd hand, 1000s of books, 1000s of prints, 1000s of maps, 1000s of postcards, 1000s of stamps, 1000s of coins, 1000s of medals, 1000s of jewellery, 1000s of furniture, 1000s of paintings, 1000s of sculpture, 1000s of ceramics, 1000s of glassware, 1000s of metalware, 1000s of textiles, 1000s of leatherware, 1000s of paperware, 1000s of woodware, 1000s of stoneware, 1000s of boneware, 1000s of shellware, 1000s of ivoryware, 1000s of hornware, 1000s of tortoiseshellware, 1000s of lacquerware, 1000s of enamelware, 1000s of glassware, 1000s of metalware, 1000s of textiles, 1000s of leatherware, 1000s of paperware, 1000s of woodware, 1000s of stoneware, 1000s of boneware, 1000s of shellware, 1000s of ivoryware, 1000s of hornware, 1000s of tortoiseshellware, 1000s of lacquerware, 1000s of enamelware, 1000s of glassware, 1000s of metalware, 1000s of textiles, 1000s of leatherware, 1000s of paperware, 1000s of woodware, 1000s of stoneware, 1000s of boneware, 1000s of 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126 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SL

**Cover picture** Lisa Milroy's "Shoes", 1985, which can be seen in an exhibition of her paintings at the Nicola Jacobs Gallery, 9 Cork Street, London W1 until April 12.

Will you struggle even at the threshold with spasms  
more delicious than all before?  
Does it make you ache so to leave me?  
Do you wish to show that even what you did before  
was nothing to what you can do  
all the rest combined to add how



By contrast with the *Wigwagbooks*, the Library of America *Whitman* prints everything of prose as well as poetry that Whitman cared to see survive. It is meant for the study rather than the vault, and is agreeable to handle besides being pleasant to read. Since Whitman thought of his words as so much physical extension of himself, one can imagine him ranking these merits high. Two features of the book also make it preferable to any combination of earlier editions: the inclusion of a complete text of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*; and a section of "Supplementary Prose" with Whitman's last years' residence in the

In his personal deportment, he appears to have sought much conformity with the tastes of his time and place. The sexual emphasis of the "Children of Adam," and of the "Comus" poem in particular was recognized as extraordinary by his contemporaries; but he did not follow the prudential advice to change or suppress them, even when the fash-



Emerson. It is true that he shared in a popular opinion whenever he could, and always avoided insulting a popular favourite. There may be a conventional ease, too, in his respect for such idols of the day as Longfellow and Whittier. But was his respect much more than tolerance? Whitman pointed out the good they did; and in Longfellow's case it had much to do with culture, in any conceivable sense of the word. But he never pretended to compare it to his good. As for Whitman's general "attack on the act of writing", what evidence is there of this? He writes in his notebook, "Make no quotations, and no reference to any other writers." But that is less an attack on writing than an echo of every great writer's demand to be read for his inventions; in short, a faithful and literal rendering of Emerson's admonition: "Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon have given; forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books." Such an attitude may turn to iconoclasm in the end; yet Whitman habitually instructs himself in a manner that could never be used by an iconoclast of writing:

In future *Leaves of Grass*. Be more severe with the final revision of the poem. . . . Also no ornaments, especially no ornamental adjectives, unless they have come mollen hot, and impudently prove themselves. No ornamental stanzas at all; not one; perfect transparent clearness and health are wanted - that is the divine style.

Whitman's hope was that, in America, the dignity of social life would reach a height at which this style expressed nothing more than the experience of the "divine average".

Zweig paraphrases the divine average as "the mystery of the ordinary", but they are not the same thing. For Whitman's idea relates to a godlike self-sufficiency that may be achieved by each person from his contact with every other, and from the impalpable modifications of his experience by theirs. There is nothing mysterious about it; and more than a point about usage is at stake. Whitman preferred democracy to feudalism (the latter being his name for everything before America) only on the ground that it promoted this sort of contact. "We will not", he says in *Specimen Days*, "have great individuals or great leaders, but a great average bulk, unprejudicedly great." He naturally admired Carlyle as an unsentinel of outworn customs, but saw that his effect was vitiated by the cult of the hero. Later in the same book, he puts down the fault to a physical indisposition which he names, figuratively to us but literally to him, dyspepsia:

For an undoubtedly candid and penetrating faculty such as [Carlyle's], the bearings he persistently ignored were marvellous. For instance, the promise, may certainly of the democratic principle, to each and every State of the current world, not so much of helping it to perfect legislation and executives, but as the only effectual method for surely, however slowly, training people on a large scale toward voluntarily ruling and managing themselves (the ultimate aim of political and other development) - to gradually reduce the fact of governing to its minimum.

The personalism, however, which America uniquely fostered, began for Whitman as an imaginative premise. If joined the practice of democracy later, with the completion of the franchise in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the American Constitution. In this sense, the future proposed by "Song of Myself" - "I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on the door-slab" - could not speak for itself without looking back at the war.

*Specimen Days* carries out the task of retrospect for the author alone. (One of its provisional titles was: *Autoclones*. . . . *Embryons*.) But to the extent that this, and indeed all of Whitman's writings, are judged as an estimate of America, they have to be read in the light of *Democratic Vistas*. From its opening allusion to the *Arcopagite*, the book concerns the possibility of realizing a "copious, sane, gigantic offspring" among the aggregate of persons in a democracy, though ill now that has been an achievement reserved for nations as a whole. No literature before the American - and that lay mostly in the future - had recognized the people as its subject. Even Whitman did not see the depth of the error, he admits, before he visited the hospitals of the Civil War and saw the courage of the individuals who suffered the agony of a nation. Yet the suffer-

ing that isolates strength and, in consequence, gives a first self-image to individualism, is only half of democracy: "There is another half, which is adhesiveness or love, that fuses, ties and aggregates, making the races comrades, and fraternizing all." Following the declaration of these two principles, Whitman asks that we change our idea of culture to bring it into keeping with both. The attempt will be not to overthrow but to civilize culture, so that we take "for its spinal meaning the formation of a typical personality of character, eligible to the uses of the high average of men - and not restricted by conditions ineligible to the masses". Throughout the argument Whitman insists on two facts about democracy: that it is an affair of daily experience and not simply of elections; and that its future is threatened, but need not be ultimately darkened, by the coming of the machine. He warns his reader emphatically against the "depravity of the business classes" whose authority has been tightened by the rationalization of labour. The weapon that the people can still use to defend themselves comes from their own sense of "the average, the bodily, the concrete, the democratic, the popular". These last, Whitman hopes to have shown, are different names for a single thing.

It has never been clear what it would mean to read Whitman just for the poetry. Readers who think they are doing so, either are not getting the poetry, or they are getting something more. Because he writes from a crisis in the history of American democracy, it may seem odd that he should implicate those who can take its victories for granted. And yet, because it was a crisis that defined the character of America, far more than the Revolutionary War ever did, he still seems to speak to us intimately. "What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you - I laid in my stores in advance." The attitude in which readers today are likeliest to find him objectionable is not that of the sage but that of the sympathizer. He cannot, they feel, sympathize with the runaway slave without reducing him to a victim, and at this point his sympathy is exposed as pity. But such an objection misunderstands Whitman's purpose in the narrative episodes of "Song of Myself" and elsewhere. These are not exchanges of identity, followed by a judgement, but experiments in a possible identity, followed by a *Stand back!* Even so, the resistance

## To abstraction and back

Lachlan Mackinnon

REED WAY DASENBROCK  
The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis: Towards the condition of painting  
271pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. £24.00/18.24/8.95

Where symbolist art aspires to the condition of music, Reed Way Dasenbrock argues, in Vorticism the arts aspire to the condition of painting, but specifically modernist painting, an art which progressively shucks off all that is not intrinsic to its nature. As painting sheds literary and narrative qualities, so literature must focus on language and disrupt narrative to make us conscious of the medium. Dasenbrock does not investigate the parallels between this "making strange" and Russian Futurism and Formalism in any depth, preferring to argue that Vorticism learns techniques of publicity from Marinetti while repudiating his rejection of the past, and learns a tendency towards abstraction from Cubism while condemning its narrowness of subject-matter and hedonistic failure to speak to the human condition. What Wyndham Lewis and his gang - the word is inescapable - wanted was an art which would move into abstraction only to return from it to show us the world, and this account helps us to look at the paintings of Lewis and Bomberg and at Epstein's "Rock Drill" with new understanding.

Vorticism is also distinguished from continental modernism by its attitude to the past. Rather than the happy-go-lucky eclecticism of Picasso, the Vorticists select radical aspects of

to Whitman's sympathy betrays the extent of the accommodation to another of his ideals. His individualism has done so well that readers want to forestall, as a trespass against themselves, any word or gesture that wears a momentary look of adhesiveness.

Lawrence said that the compulsion to love was at the bottom of Whitman's troubles, and he gave the illustration of the Eskimo in the kayak. Let Whitman see him sitting there and at once he will become the Eskimo though he does not know what a kayak is. It is a true picture; and in fact Whitman is routinely capable of stranger extravagances. In a passage of the *Notebooks* which he rephrased, rather obliquely, for "Song of Myself", he stands in the way of the man who is about to take his own life: "O despairer! I tell you, you shall not go down, / Here is my arm, press your whole weight upon me, / With tremendous breath I force him to dilate." He does this while staying quite free of the assumption he is charged with making, that he supposes the objects of his sympathy to be virtuous or reformable by himself. He does assume that "the universal and fluid soul impounds within itself not only all the good characters and heroes but the distorted characters, murderers, thieves". Impoundment is a loopy way from sympathy as most people interpret it, just as the divine average was a long way from the mystery of the ordinary. The most moving thing about Whitman after all is that he teaches, instead of an absolute from sine, a sort of patience with deformities from which a human charity might begin. A plausible further charge, that even acts of charity infringe on the rights of others, he has met by anticipation in an anecdote:

"Tell them", said the agent to the interpreter, "that the poet-chief has come to shake hands with them as brothers." A regular round of introductions and hearty hand-clappings, and "How's!" followed. "Tell them, Billy," continued the agent, "that the poet-chief says we are all really the same men and brethren together, at last, however different our places, and dress and language." An approving chorus of guttural "Ugh's!" came from all parts of the room, and W. W. retired, leaving an evidently captivated impression.

He wrote the oews story himself; but it is not recorded that any of the Sioux Indian chiefs afterwards complained of this treatment by the poet-chief. As usual, he had laid in his stores in advance.

Propertius performs what Dasenbrock calls an "ideogrammatic loop", making the past coteremporary and finding a repetition to history which is instructive but not illustrative of a larger pattern of repetition. In its aim to show things as they really are, Dasenbrock finds that the Vorticists reflect accidentally the ideas of the German art historian Wilhelm Worringer, of whom they would have known through T. E. Hulme but whom Hulme got wrong. "Paradoxically, the aesthetic of Vorticism is closer to Worringer's ideas than anyone could realize from Hulme's account of Worringer", and more neo-Kantian than he recognizes.

Dasenbrock applies these ideas interestingly to Lewis's major fiction and to his deliberate fracturing of syntax, though in dealing with Pound's syntax he does not consider how far Mallarmé, and particularly *Un coup de dés*, may, if not in 1914 then later, have been in his mind as well. Lewis's self-presentation as "The Enemy" embodies the Vorticist search for a still point, the heart of the vortex, from which to judge and condemn the formless flux of history, an idea Dasenbrock shows to be important also to Eliot and Pound. It is so Pound, however, that he is weakest: his account of the *Cantos*, examining Pound's Chinese sources more carefully than Pound did himself, gives us the not unfamiliar picture of Pound becoming a Taoist without knowing it, and disregards the pattern of Ovidian metamorphosis which figures so largely throughout the poem. That Vorticism was more important than Imagism in the poet's development is an interesting but tedious assertion, and the book fails to convince us about that central argument. It is very much more persuasive about Lewis, though, and as a conveniently sized account of what Vorticism was it is clearly written and instructive.

## Pillow Talk

Everyday, without the blather of traffic or even the squeak of a tractor ploughing the facing bill to ruffle our perfect peace, we still wake at five in the morning.

Sometimes it's midges - ridiculous tingling things taking their chance to grow suddenly deafening, sinking a well of pure sound exactly into our innermost ears

till we're up in a farcical ballet, swiping with anything close to hand, fanning the speckled darkness sweetly against each other and knowing we missed.

More often it's dreams - sometimes just rubbish and innocent, sometimes the sort we wake from believing we're mad, obsessively casting around

for a painting we've seen, or a film, or a book, anything - just so we'll think we are merely replaying the miseries someone else knew, which were never our own.

This morning's like that. Huddled tight in your arms I am pressing my mouth to your hair and mumbling that someone was stared at, hooted at grinned at, chattered at

somewhere last night. Whoever it was hid in pagodas, lay low in secret rooms, escaped, suffered the kisses of crocodiles, rotted for thousands of years amongst reeds and Nile mud.

Once I'd have thought nothing on earth could persuade me this wasn't myself - a bug-eyed narrator convinced that all he could see reflected his heart.

It's different now. Just by holding me close you make me admit that my dream isn't mine but the Opium Eater's, his pitiful, walfish thoughts struggling to make me their voice

and dying away as I speak without anything left in my head to show they were there - no jabbering figures, no words, not even an echo, nothing.

only your face on the pillow and earliest smoky sunlight strengthening into a bar which stripes our bed like the brilliant gaze of an angel whether I think so or not.

ANDREW MOTION

## Casting for the Great Satan

Colin Heywood

IMAM KHOMEINI  
Islam and Revolutions: Writings and declarations  
Translated and annotated by Hamid Algar  
460pp. Kegan Paul International. Paperback, £9.95.

SHAH BAKHSHAH  
The Reign of the Ayatollahs  
282pp. Tauris. £13.95.

AMIR TAHERI  
The Spirit of Allah: Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution  
336pp. Hutchinson. £14.95.

NIKKI R. KEDDIE (Editor)  
Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi'ism from quietism to revolution  
288pp. Yale University Press. £8.95.

DILIP HIRRO  
Iran under the Ayatollahs  
416pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £20.

GARY SICK  
All Fall Down: America's fateful encounter with Iran  
366pp. Tauris. £16.50.

ASAF RUSSAIN  
Islamic Iran: Revolution and counter-revolution  
225pp. Frances Pinter. £17.50.

0861875265

It might be argued that the history of Persia during the seven years since the sudden implosion of the Shah's régime is too complex and multi-dimensional to be left to political commentators or even to specialists in modern Persian history. Resonances and secret disharmonies of Plato and Rousseau and the Comité du Salut Public, of medieval Persia and above all of ancient Islam and its sectarian passions, on across impressions of a form of daily life whose violent terror and heightened emotions would call for a Burckhardt or a Huizinga to describe - were there any evidence of cultural efflorescence to sustain the drama.

What in fact we have, in the seven works under review, is evidence of yet another of those massive flights from reason (or what passes for it) into the oaw (but also old) willed collective mythologies or collective states of consciousness whose eruptions have increasingly punctuated the course of twentieth-century history. This evidence comes in various forms: as apologetics, in Hamid Algar's translation and edition of Imam Khomeini's writings; as explication, in Shah Bakhshah's lucid and compelling analysis of the establishment and consolidation of the rule of the ayatollahs; or as condemnation - at the heads of a worldly and unabashedly secularist sceptic, Amir Taheri. Of the other works, Nikki R. Keddie's collection of scholarly essays contains much of value to underpin and give historical depth to the phenomenon of present-day Persia. In particular to the essays by Gregory Rose on the thought of Khomeini, and William O. Beeman's exegetic dissection of the theological complexities surrounding the current Persian preoccupation with the United States as "the Great Satan", a sort of Shi' Antichrist, or Great Whore of Babylon. Dilip Hirro, in *Iran under the Ayatollahs*, follows, less sure-footedly, and on the basis of rather limited first-hand experience, in the footsteps of Bakhshah. Gary Sick was a member of Jimmy Carter's White House Security Council staff. His view of the end of the Pahlavis and the establishment of the ayatollahs, from the vantage-point of the White House, is a convincing essay in official non-comprehension, and incredulity. Asaf Ruissain's study, although not without merit as a Muslim outsider's view of events, threatens at times to collapse under the weight of the quasi-Weberian scaffolding which supports it.

The thoughts of Khomeini have had a chequered publishing history in English. An American paperback "first edition", clumsily and inaccurately translated at second hand by the "Joint Publications Research Service, Arlington, Virginia", appeared in 1979 under the title of *Ayatollah Khomeini* (sic). Mein Kampf. In such a context we must be grateful to Dr Algar for producing and editing a more scholarly version of Khomeini's lectures on Islamic government and a selection of his speeches and declarations. In *Islam and Revolution* Islamic scholars will find little that is unfamiliar: a partial and value-judgment-based view of history founded on an uncritical acceptance of dubious sources - "when Islam first appeared in Iran. . . the entire institution of monarchy was abolished"; a rampant conspiracy theory: "the imperialists, the oppressive and treacherous rulers, the Jews, Christians and materialists are all attempting to distort the truths of Islam and lead the Muslims astray"; and a repellent antisemitism: "the Jews (may God curse them) have meddled with the text of the Qur'an and have made certain changes in the Qur'an they have had printed in the occupied territories. . . the Jews and their foreign backers are opposed to the very foundations of Islam and wish to establish Jewish domination throughout the world". And so on. Of course, as Algar informs us, objecting to the inferior appellation *ayatollah*, in place of Imam, "Khomeini's role has been unique among the religious scholars of Iran". So much for Dr Algar. But the reader is warned. As Khomeini writes, "a number of orientalists serving as propaganda agents for the Imperialist institution are also active in endeavors to distort and misrepresent the truths of Islam".

The combination of vast theological learning, a fluent pen and a mind impenetrably armoured against the possibility of error is a dispiriting one, and to comment on it perhaps takes one beyond the province of the historian. Bakhshah's biographical sketch of Khomeini's early and middle years, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs*, is a valuable document, and during the seven years since the sudden implosion of the Shah's régime is too complex and multi-dimensional to be left to political commentators or even to specialists in modern Persian history. Resonances and secret disharmonies of Plato and Rousseau and the Comité du Salut Public, of medieval Persia and above all of ancient Islam and its sectarian passions, on across impressions of a form of daily life whose violent terror and heightened emotions would call for a Burckhardt or a Huizinga to describe - were there any evidence of cultural efflorescence to sustain the drama.

Deeper levels underpinning Khomeini's world-view can also be laid bare. In Iran, the thesis that the socially disruptive policies pursued under the Pahlavis should have as their end result the regressive emotionality of the present régime is an attractive one. Beeman's essay, "Images of the Great Satan", in Keddie's *Religion and Politics in Iran*, brings out this tragic ambivalence very clearly - although, as Gary Sick's *All Fall Down* demonstrates, it was a concept beyond the comprehension of the United States administration of the time, and particularly of Jimmy Carter. Beeman's thesis, that what occurred in Persia in the latter years of Reza Shah was a deep spiritual crisis unrecognized in the West, but both fostered and responded to by Khomeini, is persuasively argued: loss of the spiritual core plus economic and religious despair plus anger towards America crystallized into the image of the Great Satan, a figure whose roots go not only deep into Shi'ism but deeper into the Zoroastrian cosmology and the primal myths of Persian dualism.

All this, well enough known to American scholars in the field, appears to have been a closed book to the State Department. Most likely, as Sick makes clear, US policy-makers had become accustomed to see Persia through the eyes of the Shah, who believed that the growing manifestations of frustration with his rule were all a plot. Indeed, as long as the country was prospering, the veneer of success masked the underlying discontent. But once the economy faltered, as it did with a vengeance after 1973, the frustrations broke through. This the Shah would not, and so the US could not, see. As early as 1963, when Khomeini first emerged as the leader of the riots opposing the Shah's reforms - "corruption, constitutional violations and 'Westernisation'" - the Shah could characterize him as "an obscure individual who claimed to be a religious leader" and who "owed his title of *ayatollah*

to radio stations run by atheist émigrés belonging to the Tudeh party". For this misconception the Shah - and the US - were to pay dearly. On the human level, Sick's portrait of the despairing Carter - ill-cast, in his essential humanity, for the embodiment of the Great Satan - in the trammels of the hostages crisis, is convincing (his book ends with Reagan's assumption of the Presidency). On the political level, as Beeman remarks, the history of the United States and Persia during the years leading up to the Revolution is a sad chronicle of wrong policies, misunderstandings and cultural misperceptions. In a myopic manner, America persisted in digging itself into a ready-made villain's role, to be seen as the great external corrupter, supporter of illegitimate power and destroyer of the natural bonds that bind men together in beneficial relationships. Such, in the eyes of Khomeini and his supporters, was the nature of the Beast.

Zealotry, it must be remarked, is not peculiar to Islam, nor have most current or past Islamic régimes been notably zealot-ridden. Traditionally, in medieval Islam, the pious could (and often did) regard the habitual possessors of political and military power with a more than Actonian horror. Conversely, the wielders of that power usually gave troublesome clerics short shrift. Had Reza Shah cared to imitate the policies of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed I, circa 1415, when that consummate politician was faced with a ferocious clerical rebellion in western Anatolia, his fortune, and that of this régime, might not have undergone such a downturn. (Mehmed I sent a competent pasha against the Anatolian rebels, and caused the intransigent shah to be hung in the market-place at Serez.) But in fact the establishment of clerical power has usually signalled the onset of cultural and economic stagnation (the régime of the *Khojas* in Turkestan and Sinkiang from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or the Imamate of the

Yemen, marvellously preserved until the mid-twentieth century, for example). Possibly, despite oil, we have the same phenomenon at work here. Again, in the popular manifestations of the régime, recounted with gusto by Taheri in *The Spirit of Allah*, one thinks of Huizinga's waning Middle Ages. At the end of November 1978, as the Shah's régime began visibly to fall apart, a rumour spread that a pious old lady in Qom had found a hair from the Prophet's beard in the pages of her Qur'an. The same evening, according to Taheri, an apparition - of whom we are not told - informed the saintly lady that the faithful would be able to see the face of Khomeini in the full moon on November 27. It was also rumoured that only bastards and miscreants would fail to see the vision. On the promised day the moon, inevitably, rose; millions (sic) of people gathered on roof-tops; tears of joy were shed, and the event was celebrated in thousands of mosques. The mullahs reminded the faithful that a sure sign of the coming of the Mahdi was that the sun would rise in the west: Khomeini was now in France, and his face was shining like a sun in the moon. It may be observed that the collective hallucination was not confined to those of a religious temper: even the Tudeh party press subscribed to it. That the whole episode was stage-managed by the Ayatollah Beheshti is perhaps besides the point.

The net effect of reading these works, despite their varied merits, is to induce a sense of deep depression. The echoes of Plato and Rousseau resound and rebound from the charnel-house walls. The ghosts of both, as those of the Martyrs of Kerbelah, still elapse their bony fingers over Iran and its long-suffering, self-immolating people. The problem of who governs the governors, or of the nature of the Just City - *al-madinet* of Persian history for at least a millennium - still fails to find satisfactory answers under the ayatollahs.

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# Burmese days

Michael Carver

JAMES LUNT  
"A Hell of a Licking": The retreat from Burma 1941-2  
318pp. Collins. £15.  
000 2727072

It was a bitter-tongued old soldier, Vinegar Joe Stilwell, who described the retreat from Burma as "A Hell of a Licking". The retreat started very soon after the Japanese invaded the country on January 20, 1942. It ended in May, when what was left of the forces under Alexander and Slim reached the road from Imphal, which, on orders given by Wevell in December 1941, had been extended to the frontier with Burma, twenty miles west of the Chindwin River. Had the exhausted soldiers had to make their way on foot through the mountains of Manipur in the monsoon rains, which began in that month, far fewer of them would have made it, and even fewer of the wretched civilian refugees, most of them Indian, would have survived.

James Lunt's story of this humiliating episode in British imperial history combines a personal reminiscence with a well-researched slice of military history. In 1939, Lunt was a bored subaltern in the Duke of Wellington's Regiment in India. He applied for secondment to the Transjordan Frontier Force (many years later he was to serve in the Arab Legion), but was offered instead a posting to the Burma Rifles, which he accepted. He makes it abundantly clear that the army in Burma at that time, which included only two British battalions, was totally unprepared to face the experienced soldiers of Japan. None of them, not even the soldiers of the Burma Rifles who came from jungle-covered hill areas, was trained in jungle warfare. The main concern of the Governor and his pleasant military adviser, Major-General McLeod, was to complete the arrangements which, following the 1935 India Act, separated Burma from India.

As the war clouds gathered, McLeod was replaced by Lieutenant-General Hutton, who had been Wevell's Chief of Staff in India and is described by Lunt as giving the impression of "being more like a head-gardener than a general". Lunt himself was posted as staff captain to 2nd Burma Brigade in "Jackie" Smyth's 17th Indian Division, assigned to the defence of southern Burma against invasion from Siam. The division had been earmarked as a reinforcement for the Middle East, and had been training for the desert. It arrived in December 1941 with only one of its Indian brigades, taking under its wing both 16th Indian Brigade, recently sent from India, and 2nd Burma Brigade. The only other troops in the country formed 1st Burma Division further north. The strategic importance of Burma, with its road link to Chiang Kai-shek's China, was overshadowed in British eyes by that of Malaya and Singapore, and almost all the troops that had been on their way to reinforce Burma were diverted to Singapore. Only one Indian brigade and 7th Armoured Brigade's two regiments of Stuart tanks from the Middle East reached Rangoon just before it was almost

forcement for the Middle East, and had been training for the desert. It arrived in December 1941 with only one of its Indian brigades, taking under its wing both 16th Indian Brigade, recently sent from India, and 2nd Burma Brigade. The only other troops in the country formed 1st Burma Division further north. The strategic importance of Burma, with its road link to Chiang Kai-shek's China, was overshadowed in British eyes by that of Malaya and Singapore, and almost all the troops that had been on their way to reinforce Burma were diverted to Singapore. Only one Indian brigade and 7th Armoured Brigade's two regiments of Stuart tanks from the Middle East reached Rangoon just before it was almost

ly welcomed as an ally, and would have added the abandonment of Rangoon to the ignominy of the loss of Singapore. Lunt's objective account achieves a delicate balance between the resentment of the man at the sharp end and the demands of higher strategy. As a participant at a lower level, he sympathizes with Smyth, facing a series of dilemmas, culminating in his decision to demolish the Sittang bridge. In order to prevent its capture by the Japanese, while most of his division was still on the far side. He incurred severe criticism for his decision, although his successor, Cowan, described it as "heroic and inevitable". Smyth's subsequent request for sick leave sounded the death-



Reproduced from Ronald Searle's 'To the Kwa and Back: War Drawings 1930-1945 (192pp. Collins in association with the Imperial War Museum. £15. 000 2174367)'.

surrounded by the Japanese. The two regiments were to prove invaluable, not only as battle-experienced troops but also as having the only reliable communications.

Lunt provides an almost worm's-eye view of the dilemma that faced commanders at every level. Pressure from on high, represented by Wevell, both as commander of the short-lived ABDA (American-British-Dutch-Australian) command and as C-in-C India, urged Hutton and Smyth to deploy further forward than seemed prudent and to attempt offensive operations, when reason demanded a staged withdrawal up the huge rivers into northern Burma and thence to India. But that, involving links with China, would have incurred the extreme displeasure of the United States, recent-

knoll of his military career, notwithstanding his First World War VC.

Wavell comes badly out of the story, but Lunt appreciates that he was under great pressure, as well as physically affected by a recent fall in Singapore, which broke a rib. Even if Wavell personally had preferred a deliberate staged withdrawal to India, he would not have been allowed to abandon Burma without a fight so soon after the débâcle in Malaya and Singapore. He was later criticized for turning down Chiang Kai-shek's offer, made in December 1941, to send two Chinese armies to Burma, and for accepting only one; but Lunt makes it clear that Wavell had sound practical reasons for doing so. Relations with the Chinese were at best uneasy, and not helped by Stil-

well's deeply ingrained Anglophobia. On his arrival in Rangoon, as the Japanese threatened it, Alexander adopted Wavell's realistic optimism, but was immediately forced to face reality. Unlike Hutton, who stayed as his chief of staff, he was favoured by forces manning against all the odds to extricate the forces from Rangoon through a gap in the rear of the encircling Japanese army. But then, after, joined by Slim, he could only make the best of a bad job. Lunt paints a vivid picture of the grim retreat, as the Japanese were able to reinforce both their army and their air force through Rangoon. As the RAF and Chennault's American Volunteer Group were forced to abandon their forward airfields and withdraw, the former to India, the latter to China, the Japanese established total air supremacy, and their army constantly threatened to outflank every attempt, either by Alexander's mainly Indian troops or by Stilwell's ragged Chinese, to stand and fight. Many of the Burmese troops disappeared to care for their families and the civilians turned against their former masters, whose presence they had always resented, although not quite as intensely as their introduction of Indians, whom the Burmese disliked. They took their brutal revenge against the latter as they fled. Lunt, many years later, as a major-general, to be British Defence Adviser in Delhi, sympathizes both with the Burmese in their desire to be rid of their former overlords and with the hapless Indian civilian refugees who bore the brunt of it.

The unfortunate soldiers of all races, withdrawing northwards by rail, river, road and track, were fortunate that their senior commanders were of the calibre of Alexander, Slim and Stilwell, accustomed to adversity and steadfast in it. Alexander's decision to withdraw his forces via Imphal and not by the Hukawng valley, which would have kept him closer to Stilwell, was probably decisive in saving them, arduous as it proved, especially for 2nd Burma Brigade. Their struggle through the Kabaw valley was imposed on them, and Lunt's judgment, by Slim's misadventure of the Japanese threat in that area. He himself was spared that experience, having at last been culled to the dysentery from which he had suffered throughout the retreat. He was lucky to have been flown back to India.

"A Hell of a Licking" it was. James Lunt's graphic account reminds us of the dangers of complacency in political judgment and military preparation.

conclusions, but he does leave the impression that the new information which he has been favoured with, or which has recently been published in China, is better than what was before. This is doubtless true for the most part, but not necessarily so in every case. A participant like Braun, for example, is consistently scored here as probably mistaken in his details of his memoirs - "handicapped by lack of notes and writing thirty years after the events". Yet Salisbury must be aware that precisely the same handicap dogs his other memoirs, more glamorous, currently more powerful and more seemingly helpful though they may be.

Not is it clear at the end that the author is in full control of his material. He relies on able stalling sentences and somewhat disconnected paragraphs or passages in his endeavour to bring together a mass of unwieldy information, not all of which is directly to do with the Long March. We keep slipping back and forth in time, with background information on personalities and events, intermingled with indications of what has now happened to the same people fifty years later, and it becomes rather confusing. This is accentuated by the lack of separate maps for the major sectors of the Long March, and also of any of the dramatic personae - particularly helpful to readers unfamiliar with Chinese names, these are counsels, perhaps, of perfection.

Harrison Salisbury is to be congratulated for finally coming out of orbit and landing at the centre of his ambition, nursed for more than a decade, to write the story of the Long March retracing its path and interviewing the survivors.

# Failures of the will to power

Robert Skidelsky

CORRELLI BARNETT  
The Audit of War: The illusion and reality of Britain as a great nation  
399pp. Macmillan. £14.95.  
0133 353765

Although Correlli Barnett is a distinguished military historian, *The Audit of War* is not a military history, though it is set in the Second World War. Rather, it is a continuation of a wide-ranging inquiry, which he started in *The Collapse of British Power* (1972), into the causes of Britain's decline - a topic which has attracted historians, sociologists and economists. In the past few years the volume of the literature has swelled alarmingly, and not surprisingly, since Mrs Thatcher has made the attempt to reverse their decline the central issue in British politics. The chief interest in Barnett's book is the perspective a military historian brings to the problem.

Barnett's main thesis will be familiar to readers of his earlier study. There he attributes the "collapse of British power" to the rot in the national character which set in during the nineteenth century, under the influence of evangelicalism. The evangelical revival provided the Armoldian model of the "Christian gentleman" which dominated the Victorian public-school system. It turned a ruling class of hard-willed, hard-minded realists into one of woolly-minded moralists and amateurs, who lacked both the will and the training to defend what their forefathers had won. This class sacrificed the true requisites of national power - a ruthless pursuit of the national interest (by war if necessary), backed by the industrial means of war - to a romantic internationalism in foreign policy and *laissez-faire* in economic policy.

Running through this polemic was the contrast between the "Elizabethan and Cromwellian conception of the nation-state as a single strategic and commercial enterprise" and the high value attached to individualistic muddling-through which succeeded it. "Whereas the British solved the problem of the inefficiency of the State by abolishing the State as far as possible, European countries like Prussia instead modernised the State and made it efficient." *The Collapse of British Power* is the story of an ungovernable mercantile world for whom the international arena is a Hobbesian jungle and a nation's industry a power resource which enables it to fight off the other predators.

We shall return to this argument later. For the moment, it is merely necessary to note that Barnett applies it virtually unchanged to the story he has to tell in *The Audit of War*. The title is an intriguing one; Barnett aims to capture the performance of British industry at a particular moment of stress and show why the dreadful inefficiencies which the audit reveals were not remedied. The explanation, in turn, involves three cultural attitudes he had described in his previous book, which dictated the response to the war experience, ensured its lessons were not learnt, and pushed us further down the slope.

Barnett's project involves a systematic attempt to destroy the myth of Britain's finest hour - at least on its industrial side. Far from humming to the new tunes of common purpose and productive zeal, the British war effort was a thing of shreds and patches, exhibiting all the familiar signs of the "British disease". Man for man, German industry performed far better than Britain's. Only Hitler's "faulty steering" plus American help saved us from defeat.

But the true "audit of war" remained hidden by the outward facade of victory, the propaganda about the scale of the national effort, and the deceptive inflow of American aid under Lend-Lease. As a result, the British marked the peace blind to the true extent of their weakness, and the steps required to remedy it. Instead of re-equipping their industries, retraining their trade unions, and educating their work-force to compete in world markets, they set out to build a New Jerusalem, burdening an already weak economy with vast additional costs. The upshot was protracted economic decline, which culminated in the decade of the past ten years.

This bald summary of a dense argument already suggests some problems. To start with,

it is not apparent that an "audit" of Britain's war economy sheds any special light on its performance in peace. It reveals - or rather Barnett reveals - that the British economy was less efficient than Germany's. But so it was before, and so it remained after. Barnett would argue that this particular episode is important because it bred "illusions" which prevented the right kind of reconstruction. But here a second difficulty arises. Were these "illusions", if illusions they were, those of war or those of peace? In other words, does not Barnett himself show, in his earlier book, that these illusions were deeply ingrained in British culture as moulded by the misguided Dr Arnold and the public-school ethos? The moralists took over the Second World War, as they had taken over the First World War, because, in a sense, they were bound to. That they would mistake the "audit of war" was written in their stars, not in the record or result of the war itself. So while Barnett's own "audit" is a welcome addition to the literature on the war economy, it does not relate as well as he supposes to his wider theme.

Barnett's three dense chapters on the coal, steel and shipbuilding industries make up a depressing catalogue of inefficiencies, culled from hundreds of investigative reports and inquiries. Britain entered the Second World War with a coal industry fit only to ride "with little competitive effort on the crest of fast-swelling demand". Production was spread over 1,700 mines; productivity was between half and two-thirds of Germany's, largely reflecting the much lower percentage of coal mechanically cut, conveyed and loaded; the managers were badly trained; the alienated miners more interested in raising wages than coal. The story of steel is the same: "plant already mostly obsolete or even obsolete in date or design, organisation of production and marketing fragmented, leadership outmoded in outlook and often technically ignorant, research and development neglected and underfunded, work-force wedded to traditional methods of demarcations". The story is very much the same with shipbuilding.

Even the more successful new-technology industries, directly related to combat performance, found it hard to make their way in the face of inherited defects. The Spitfire was as good as the Messerschmitt BF-109 but took two-thirds more man-hours to build; the progress of the jet-engine aircraft from the drawing-board to the squadron "evokes the turkey rather than the jet". The rise in aircraft production (one of the war's success stories) was achieved not by a "revolution in productivity, but simply by deploying 115,500 extra machine tools and over 1 million extra workers". British tanks until late in the war "were mechanical abortions that foreshadowed the disastrous car models launched into world markets by the British automobile industry in the postwar era". Even with radar, a familiar disaster appeared "between scientific genius and industrial backwardness. For while Britain could devise all these technological wonders, she could not make them quickly enough or in large enough quantities." The electronics industry "suffered from a galloping attack of the British disease". Only one industry emerges unscathed from Barnett's audit - the chemical industry. It had been started by a German - Ludwig Mond.

The story is certainly a grim one; but the audit is only half done. Barnett has not tried to provide a true balance sheet of the performance of the British economy under wartime conditions, but only an audit of the state of Britain's industrial efficiency, which boded ill for the coming battles for world markets. He provides an important corrective, therefore, to the traditional emphasis on the success of macroeconomic management and of allocating resources. But this side of the balance must be kept in mind if one is to understand the way the British responded to the war record. For example, Britain managed to mobilize a far higher proportion of its manpower (and womanpower) for war than Germany did. That output was raised mainly by the cavalry-charger method - burning resources at industry regardless of cost and efficiency - was inevitable in wartime. Civilian leadership was better than Germany's - as Barnett acknowledges. Here is a puzzle which he does not even consider, how was it that all those classicists managed to rise

to the challenge of twentieth-century war? There is another point which Barnett ignores. Promises of a juster social order were not the result of a mistaken audit of war; they were integral to the war effort itself. Politicians knew that they reneged on them at their peril.

Other "inefficiencies" which emerge from Barnett's study do not bear the weight he attaches to them. He emphasizes that Germany was more self-sufficient as a war economy than was Britain; that Britain had to buy, borrow or beg vital parts from the United States (especially machine tools) to keep the war effort going. This is true. But what is the lesson one is supposed to learn? That self-sufficiency is good? Self-sufficiency may or may not be a sound strategic doctrine - it is a strange doctrine for a military historian that a nation should expect to fight wars without allies with whom it can pool resources - but it is a poor economic one. An economy may be badly adapted for war but well adapted for peace - if by that one means adapted to raising the standard of life of its people. Barnett sees an economy too much as a war resource - a hirsute natural, I suppose, to a military historian.

Again, Barnett's few pages of dismissive comment on the "illusions" bred by the success of wartime "Keynesian" management are superficial. He suggests that wartime full employment was "entirely bogus" and thus "quite misleading as a guide to future policy", because it ignored the difference between selling "old-fashioned, ill-designed, ill-made end over-priced" British goods to consumers who had no option but to buy them and selling them to consumers who had a choice between British and foreign goods.

There is, of course, a great deal in this, but it leaves out two important points. First, planning for full employment after 1945 assumed a continuously higher level of world demand than had existed in the 1930s, to be achieved by a combination of national full employment policies and the reformed monetary system set up at Bretton Woods in 1944. Second, it assumed American aid or loans to Europe during the reconstruction period. Barnett may be right, therefore, to say that it was an illusion to suppose that Britain, given its deep-seated structural and competitive problems, could have sustained wartime levels of employment in an international environment unchanged from that of the 1930s. But where is this illusion to be found? Again, Barnett remarks that the failure of wartime full employment to boost the productivity of labour was "hardly encouraging" for the prospect of doing so in peace. This ignores the fact that the bulk of the extra savings which fuller wartime employment brought were consumed by the war itself. It was not unreasonable for the post-war planners to believe that in peacetime such savings could be invested in new machines, which would increase the productivity of the British economy.

I cannot help feeling that all this emphasis on "audits" and "illusions" is a red herring. No country which has just emerged victorious in a great struggle is going to persuade itself that it suffered a catastrophic defeat. The valid general point is that victorious and defeated nations react differently to their war experiences. A great victory validates a nation's culture and institutions. A great defeat undermines them. The loser thus has an incentive to "change its ways" which a victor lacks. The war was not, therefore, a "lost opportunity" for Britain to become more efficient; the opportunity was not there. What the war did was to weaken the political and financial opposition to old reforming projects; it did not create any new ones.

Barnett's main argument stands independently of any "audit of war" - or rather the same "audit" would have been available for any five years plucked at random from the twentieth century. British industry was badly led, badly equipped and had a badly trained labour force wedded to restrictive practices. It was in a poor position to compete with Germany, Japan or the United States. All the best brains of the country and available resources should have been directed to remedying this state of affairs as quickly as possible. Instead energies and resources were poured into New Jerusalem projects, establishing the Welfare State, rehousing the working class, bringing new industries to decayed areas for social reasons, and reconstructing the educational

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## Dick Wilson

HARRISON SALISBURY  
The Long March: The untold story  
419pp. Macmillan. £16.95.  
0333 409310

The dust-jacket of Harrison Salisbury's *The Long March* shows a recent photograph of the Bridge of Iron Chai across the Dadu River at Luding, high in the remote Tibetan-populated interior of China. It is a frail affair of wooden planks, awing vulnerably over the headlong torrent beneath. Yet if the Chinese Communist Red Army had not succeeded in crossing that bridge in 1935, in the teeth of fierce enemy fire from the opposite bank, there would be no Long March to read about, no Communist experiment in China, no legend of Mao Zedong.

Inevitably historians have exaggerated its importance; in his opening pages Salisbury is unwise enough to compare the Long March with the storming of the Bastille, Valley Forge and the Winter Palace of St Petersburg in 1917. Far from being identified with the Chinese nation and people, however, the Chinese Communists in 1935 were only a minority on the fringe of the nationalist movement. They did not come to power until fourteen years later, and then only with the unwitting help of their enemies, the Japanese and the incompetent Chinese Nationalists. Without those factors the Long March would indeed have proved, as Salisbury unintentionally miscalls it, an "endless retreat".

But the Long March is a sensational story,

the outstanding epic of modern Chinese history, and it is hard to think of another event in the twentieth century as capable of capturing the imagination. Salisbury's virtue is to have provided us with the most up-to-date and detailed account of it.

He is a former *New York Times* correspondent who, repeatedly refused a visa for China, systematically travelled all round China's borders to write *Orbit of China* (1967) showing what it looked like from the outside. It is that kind of persistence which enabled him in the end to gain access to many survivors and eyewitnesses of the Long March, the route of which he virtually re-traversed for the purpose. He draws upon new memoirs published by many participants, notably Peng Dehuai, Nie Rongzhen and Xu Shiyu. Salisbury was also able to tap an impressive number of new informants by interview or letter, including many Red Army commanders of the period, such as Yang Shangkun, and in a few cases old inhabitants along the route. One name in particular stands out, that of Wu Xiquao, now directing China's Institute for Strategic Studies, who was an interpreter for the German Comintern agent Otto Braun at many of the crucial conferences of leaders on the Long March. His name is mentioned about eighty times, which must be a record for a book of this kind.

In contrast with earlier years, some of this new evidence is not uniformly creditable. The Red Army used to be famous (by its own account) for being fair to innocent civilians along the route, paying for its food. Now it takes without paying because the alternative was to starve - and when it distributed

opium to the peasants. Such honesty is a welcome new element in Chinese Communist history. Several episodes on the Long March are illuminated by new information. Salisbury has discovered a previously unknown conference of the Politburo and Military Commission in mid-December 1934 at Tongdao in southern Hunan, which was evidently a prelude to the famous Zunyi Conference where Mao emerged as an alternative leader. It was at Tongdao that Mao first adumbrated his surprising strategy of striking further inland to escape the Nationalists. Again, we have the first published account of the Battle of Qinggangpo in Guizhou, an important engagement previously unknown to the outside world; the author's industry is only marred by the misspelling of the place on his end-paper map.

There is a great deal more, as was to be expected, about the Zunyi Conference itself, where Zhou Enlai and the Russian-trained comrades effectively abdicated in favour of the "native" leadership model of Mao Zedong. A newly released memorandum by one of its few surviving participants, Chen Yun, is particularly helpful. It would be churlish to note that this discussion would confirm the presence at the Conference of Deng Xiaoping, today the grand old man of China, who to the Cultural Revolution period had been accused of faking the evidence, insinuating a portrait of himself to hang in the conference hall with the eighteen others, when he had not been there at all.

There is a problem here. It is natural for new accounts of controversial recent history to be coloured by the self-interest of the faction now in power (everyone wanted to have been on the Long March). Salisbury seeks a balance in his



## Effects of reform

Phyllis Grosskurth

SHEILA JEFFREYS  
*The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and sexuality 1880-1930*  
232pp. Pandora. £5.95.  
0 86358 050 5

An impressive number of studies on the struggle of women in history has appeared within the past decade. Sheila Jeffreys's *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and sexuality 1880-1930* is among the best; it is splendidly documented, provocative and never dull. Jeffreys persistently challenges such persuasive assumptions as the view that the last hundred years represent a progression from Victorian prudery to sexual liberation. Her most original contribution is the theory that the sexual reformers, who seemed to promise sexual emancipation for women, were actually contributing in a paradoxical way to a more subtle form of enslavement. Social purity was the rallying cry of the feminists of the 1880s. Josephine Butler galvanized the attempt to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts which legitimized double standards by sanctioning the enforced examination of prostitutes in garrison towns. She pointed out that the Acts had been promulgated solely to protect the health of men who had infected the prostitutes in the first place.

Until recently, only church historians have paid much attention to Jane Ellice Hopkins, a contemporary of Butler's who played a leading role in a campaign to prevent the sexual abuse by men of little girls, through the Moral Reform Union. Active from 1881 to 1897, the organization lobbied for legislation against incest. Those who opposed such efforts regarded the subjects as too disgusting for discussion; they realized that the "indecent" women who raised their voices in protest were in effect undermining the comfortable facade of Victorian respectability. The most effective means of combating them was by malicious innuendo. Nevertheless, a series of legislative measures emerged which began to curb the power of men over women's bodies. The passing of the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1884 ended the power of a husband to imprison his wife for refusing conjugal rights and the Clitheroe Case of 1891 abolished the possibility of a husband having his wife imprisoned for refusing to live with

him. Feminists of the period were divided between those who advocated total sexual abstinence, and others, such as Annie Besant, who saw sexual intercourse as essential to health. However, like Christabel Pankhurst, Besant ultimately turned to spiritual solutions.

Opposition to change took many guises. The "victimological" perspective described abused children as provocative, and as recently as 1914 the Lord Bishop of Ely opined that such unfortunate children should be ostracized lest they contaminate others. There was one faction which held that those guilty of sexual assault were mentally defective; more disturbing still was the "reasonable cause to believe" that a girl was of legal age (thirteen until 1889), an attractive acceptable to male judges, juries and policemen. There was also a widespread belief that male sexuality was uncontrollable and different in kind from that of the female, whose role was entirely passive.

The most interesting section of Jeffreys's book concerns the insidious effect of the sex researchers and reformers. Marie Stopes's *Morried Love* (1918) claimed, without any scientific evidence, that sperm was necessary for a woman's bodily health. Van de Velde's *Ideal Marriage* of 1926 heralded the flood of sex books which reinforced female inadequacy in women who did not respond in accordance with male fantasies.

What Jeffreys has to say about Havelock Ellis deserves reflection. She believes his assumption of innate biological differences undermines feminist arguments that the form taken by male sexuality has been the result of social influences. Here, in concentrating on her justified indignation that he ignored the problem of rape, she underestimates Ellis's contribution to female sexual fulfilment.

Jeffreys understands why male homosexuals have regarded *Sexual Inversion* as liberating because of the way it broke down stereotypes, but she feels Ellis did a disservice to lesbians in his description of a "type" modelled on his wife Edith and her friends.

Finally, Jeffreys questions the normative value system which Ellis was assuming in his view of motherhood as the highest of women's achievements. It is true that Ellis was both a liberating force and the product of his time; but it is unreasonable to expect people to transcend their cultural limitations completely and to view the world with the eyes of a contemporary feminist.

such as freedom of contract, freedom of religion, data protection and environmental protection. O'Donovan, choosing to juxtapose the sex or gender division with the public/private boundary, argues that we are insufficiently aware of the implications of the existence of the boundary itself. She sets out to explore some of these, as well as charting the shifts of the boundary over several centuries. Lawyers, inevitably concerned with legal regulation and its effectiveness, do not always realize the significance of not regulating a particular sphere. Non-intervention by the law does not inevitably mean that the sphere is uncontrolled; other agencies of control, such as the family, may be seen as more appropriate. This, in turn, may have the effect of supporting the inequality of power which derives from the division of labour within the family.

O'Donovan gives a condensed historical overview of the shift from private (unregulated) to public (regulated) in the sphere of marriage and divorce from feudal times to the nineteenth century. The change from private arrangement of marriage and divorce to public constitution of a legal form was accompanied by the placing of financial responsibility for the family on to the husband. She concludes, "within the modern bureaucratic state the nuclear family of husband, wife and their children is treated as a unit."

Rather than intervene directly to regulate family relations publicly, the state delegates its power and authority to the husband. His role is to control what goes on within the family in private. This general conclusion is then given point by an analysis of specific areas of law dealing with the relations between the sexes. Clearly, discrimination will not be removed merely by replacing sex-based classification with functional classification or

## Untying the unrespectables

Michael Mason

ALLEN HORSTMAN  
*Indian Country*  
Victorian Divorce  
196pp. Croom Helm. £17.95.  
0 7099 3765 2

In 1857, with the passing of the "Act to amend the Law relating to Divorce and Matrimonial Causes in England", English law for the first time made explicit provision for divorce. Until then, obtaining a divorce was a matter of taking advantage of certain facilities in the law not originally designed for this purpose - though admittedly the sequence of steps became routine: first, divorce *o mensa et thoro* in a church court on the ground of adultery (this was a kind of judicial separation, and did not permit the parties to remarry); second, a common law suit against the correspondent in adultery for trespass, assault and criminal conversation ("crim con"); and finally, a private Act of Parliament to achieve a complete divorce, a *vinculo matrimonii*. The first man to accomplish this triple manoeuvre was Lord Roos in 1670. Before him no English person had ever obtained a divorce in the full sense, not even Henry VIII. And between 1670 and 1857 only four wives sued successfully for divorce of any kind.

The 1857 Act allowed divorce to a husband for his wife's adultery, and to a wife for her husband's adultery when combined with incest, bigamy, rape, sodomy, bestiality, cruelty or desertion. Within a year of its enactment 253 petitions for divorce were filed, as opposed to a norm under the old system of four per year. This annual figure had rather more than doubled by the end of the century (to a rate still less than one eighteenth what it is today). These numbers show that 1857 was important in making divorce cheaper, but it is arguable that otherwise nothing changed. Adultery remained the only ground, and the additional offence that had to be proved by an aggrieved wife still biased the possibilities of divorce against her. Lord Campbell, who had chaired the Royal Commission on divorce in 1850, judged that the act preserved the law "as it has practically subsisted for 200 years".

But even if the 1857 Act eventually amounted to nothing more than a legal tidying operation, the pressure for divorce reform in

the mid-nineteenth century was now asserted only by lawyers and parliamentarians of a housebound disposition; at various times a wider agenda of reform was canvassed. A Royal Commission was originally proposed as early as 1830. A variety of bills to change the law were introduced throughout the 1840s. The evils of ill-assorted marriage were very commonly insisted on by polemic writers in these decades; with the Owanite proposal that marriages should be dissolved more easily being countered by conservative appeals for more knowledgeable attitudes towards matrimony on the part of young women. Caroline Norton agitated, successfully, for child custody arrangements less punitive to the divorced mother. Feminists tried to get increased publicity for divorced women's property and savings enshrined in the 1857 act.

Allen Horstman has sought to link his account of the coming and consequences of the 1857 Act to Victorian sexual culture at large. This is unfortunate, as the topic is not easily adapted to this purpose. His preface tells us that his research for this short book was done in two phases, separated by ten years, and that it evidenced in the gap between the material used in the work and its interpretation.

Horstman's analysis is questionable. He seeks to contradict the possibility to some assumption that divorce provisions arose in the ideal of "compassionate marriage" gained ground, and to argue instead that the 1857 act was devised for what he calls "Respectable". But this is to draw on an even more facile and entrenched idea about the Victorians (Horstman also has a chapter on "Victorian Hypocrisy"). And the case made in such a close, inarticulate style that it is impossible to grasp, let alone assess. It remains, for instance, unclear whether "Respectables" are supposed to have kept adultery as the ground of divorce in 1857 because they wished "unrespectable" to be punished for their immorality, or because they wished them to be able to purge this immorality through remarriage.

Horstman seems to know that there is something strange about his style and argument, because he claims in his preface to "have adopted the posture and tone of a respectable Victorian gentleman". Yet there is no attempt at stylistic impersonation in the book, and the claim has to be put down to a last-minute attempt to justify the weariness and uncertainties of this analysis.

Is imposed by the law, in the private sphere (matrimonial property, family finances) the law will not impose a community of assets and instead uphold the values of individualism and non-intervention.

The third section of the book is the most interesting; it deals with possible reforms and pulls some of the earlier arguments together. The underlying point is that all reform will fail if it does not confront both the existence and the implications of the public/private divide. Reform in the public sphere which merely abolishes sex-based distinctions (for example in employment/legislation) may have the effect of denying the needs and responsibilities which arise from the private sphere (the family). Reforms which are designed to affect only the public will therefore be ineffective at achieving equality. In the reform of the private, several different strategies have been used, from regulation (of divorce, for example), through legislation based on the contract model, to the formal justice (conciliation, therapeutic and inquisitorial systems) and privatization, characterized by non-intervention and non-regulation. None of these have been very effective at reducing existing inequality. Although the existence of the law in the family sphere is significant, it is probable that increased legislation or regulation would reinforce existing structural inequalities and divisions. If equality is to be taken seriously, and to be more than merely formal, then ultimately the distinction between public and private must collapse. The conventional values of family (responsibility, care and obligation) must be recognized as relevant not just in the domestic/private sphere, but extended to the public sphere, supplementing the rights-based liberal values of respect for persons which currently predominate.

## Custer's revenges

Mark Abley

PETER MATTHIESSEN  
*Indian Country*  
300pp. Collins Harvill. £12.95.  
0 002 17345 X  
GARY E. MOULTON  
*The Papers of Chief John Ross*  
Volumes One and Two  
1,552pp. University of Oklahoma Press;  
distributed in the UK by Eurospan. £95 the set.  
0 8061 1865 2

"In the language of my people", a Cherokee spokesman told the United States Congress in 1978, "there is a word for land: Eloheh. This same word also means history, culture, and religion. We cannot separate our place on earth from our lives on the earth nor our vision nor our meaning as a people." Jimmie Durham, who was testifying against the construction of a dam that would flood the ancient towns and burial-grounds of his people, is but one among dozens of eloquent voices that Peter Matthiessen quotes in *Indian Country*. So passionate is his catalogue of destruction that it reads, in places, like a requiem for America.

At the book's heart is Matthiessen's vision of the holiness of the land itself. "One cannot love the Creator", he points out, "and desecrate Creation." Or as Durham informed the baffled politicians, "When we speak of land, we are not speaking of property, territory, or even a

piece of ground upon which our houses sit and our crops are grown. We are speaking of something truly sacred." *Indian Country* is a selection of Matthiessen's recent essays describing the struggles of American Indians (in Florida, Tennessee, New York, South Dakota, and five south-western states) to retain that sacredness against an onslaught of dams and power-plants, mines and chain-saws, American services and beliefs. In so far as Matthiessen's audience lies in the dominant culture, the essays amount to a polemical appeal for a change of heart.

And in so far as Matthiessen is a realist, he knows that *Indian Country* is unlikely to have much effect. The forces against his ideals are the strongest in the nation: the US government, the US army, big corporations and labour unions - not to mention the power-structure within many Indian bands. His outrage has several foundations: moral and political anger against the continuing maltreatment of Indians; spiritual rage at the loss of their ancient, holistic values; and ecological horror at the mutilation of America's wild spaces.

Though he claims in a brief foreword that "*Indian Country* is essentially a journal of travels and encounters with Indian people", it is also a book of history. White Americans have often spoken nobly of their predecessors on the continent; Thomas Jefferson suggested in 1793 that "the Indians have the full, undivided, and independent sovereignty as long as they choose to keep it, and . . . this may be

forever". Their behaviour tells a different story: that Indian country remains intact only until its resources of water, trees, minerals, or arable soil are suddenly found to be "necessary". One of Matthiessen's most melancholy chapters describes the remnant Pit River bands of northern California - a state which reduced its Indian population from about 125,000 to less than 20,000 in the thirty years after the United States bought it from Mexico. Sometimes the genocide was overt: "What are the lives of one hundred or one thousand of these savages compared to the life of a single American citizen?" asked an editorial-writer in the *Shasta Courier* of 1853. His answer: "We say shoot them down wherever you find them." More commonly, though, the injustice wore a cloak of legality. The Pit River nation lost its land to settlers, Matthiessen observes, by its failure

to send a delegation for eight hundred miles on foot across unknown country to an unimaginable place to make marks on a "talking leaf" in unknown language in order to claim title to ancestral lands that they did not know were threatened and had never conceived of "owning" in the first place.

The heroes of *Indian Country* are those few scattered women and men, and those fewer communities, that remain on the land and that allow little compromise with a consumer culture. Their lives are a far cry, in faith as well as in time, from the slave-owning Christian merchant by the name of John Ross whose political adroitness gained him a position of leadership within the Cherokee nation even though he was only one-eighth Cherokee by blood.

Ross's letters and private papers - assembled by the indefatigable Gary E. Moulton - are full of grovelling rhetoric. "We should be wanting in liberal and charitable feelings were we to doubt the virtue and magnanimity of the People of Georgia", he wrote in 1829, a few years before the people of Georgia and the US army evicted the Cherokee at gunpoint from their homeland and sent most of them on a forced march westward into unsettled territory. More than four thousand died on the "Trail of Tears". To his credit, Ross was resolute in his opposition to the Removal Act. But even in the strange land beyond the Mississippi, he continued to prosper. The second volume of his *Papers* includes a bill-of-sale from 1854 recording his exchange of a young black man for a mulatto woman of eighteen and her son of five.

Ross, like his successors among Indian politicians up to the present, fully accepted the white man's notions of property. The traditionalists whom Matthiessen admires have a separate understanding of the use and ownership of land. Some half a century after the Cherokee migration, Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts visited their new reservation and came to an interesting conclusion: "There

was not a pauper in that nation, and the nation did not owe a dollar. . . . Yet the defect of the system was apparent. They have got as far as they can go, because they own their land in common. . . . There is no selfishness, which is at the bottom of civilization." To civilize the Indian nations, Senator Dawes introduced a bill which eliminated their communal ownership of property in favour of individual land-titles: apportioning, in other words, land which the people already owned. So successful was the Dawes Act that within a few years, Indian country across the United States had shrunk from 138 million to 52 million acres.

What remains is under constant threat. Matthiessen devotes a couple of bitter chapters to the plight of the Hopi and Navajo peoples of the Arizona desert, the site of "the ugliest ecological disaster of our time" (He is not given, incidentally, to loose superlatives.) At Black Mesa, a mountain that the Hopi hold particularly sacred, the Peabody Coal Company has built what is probably the world's largest strip mine on land so arid that it can never be reclaimed. Even the visible pollution, however, may be less serious than Peabody's invisible depletion and poisoning of the underground water, on which the Hopi and Navajo depend for what is left of their traditional life.

In his efforts to write a cool, factual prose, Matthiessen occasionally buries too much of his artistic talent which was so evident in *Far Tortuga*, one of the loveliest American novels of the past twenty years, and in *The Snow Leopard*, his classic Asian travel-book and spiritual autobiography. As a journalist and essayist he is articulate, brave, but (at moments) unsure. *Indian Country* suffers a little from his personal ambivalence towards the radical tactics of the American Indian Movement (AIM). Apparently he supports the idea that native peoples in the United States should argue their case before the United Nations or the International Court of Justice, though a notion that denies the jurisdiction of the World Court over its policies in Central America is unlikely to accept outside intervention when it comes to "American" land.

"Jimmie Durham lost his battle, by the way. The local farmers were evicted, the valley of the Little Tennessee was drowned and the Cherokee burial-grounds were destroyed. Tellico Lake, which washed over them, has failed to attract industry to its haunted banks. The government may soon make it a dump for toxic chemicals. Meanwhile, a new board-game called *Custer's Revenge* has appeared. "Victory was achieved", Matthiessen tells us; "when a naked white man caught and ravished an Indian woman." Such is the fate, in the land of the free, of those whom Columbus called *una gente in Dios* - a people in God.

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# Flight from reality

John Warrack

DAVID BROWN  
Tchaikovsky: A biographical and critical study  
Volume Three: The Years of Wanderings,  
1868-1885  
336pp. Gollancz. £25.  
0575 037741

If Volume One of David Brown's study covered Tchaikovsky's *Lehjahre* and Volume Two—the period of his disastrous marriage and near suicide—his *Flegeljahre*, this latest volume follows him in his *Wanderjahre*. Emotionally shattered, he withdrew into himself and into the contemplation of his bruised nature; while his compulsive travelling suggests with painful obviousness a flight from unwelcome truths.

Most of the details of his unhappy inner life will never come to light (since the official Soviet line still denies his true nature), and there is no reason why they should. Enough, surely, is known for us to form a sufficient picture of his private world during these years. There was what Dr Brown calls "The odd case of Leonty Tkachenko", though Tchaikovsky is far from being the only homosexual to have taken pity on a disturbed young man only to find he had a pathological case on his hands. There is also the evidence of the diaries. Most of these were destroyed, but one volume has long been known since its publication in 1923. The editor was Tchaikovsky's naval brother Ippolit, who could presumably confront with sailorly directness material that would not have got past the nervy homosexual brother Modest. There are plenty of unmistakable references to the guilt of "X" and "Z", and to Tchaikovsky's guilty fascination with his nephew, Bob Davydov.

Troubling Tchaikovsky hardly any less was his family. His sister Sasha Davydova had become a morphine addict, it seems in part out of attempts to relieve the pain of kidney-stones;

her daughter Tanya was what we should now call anorexic, and prone to cast herself into various unsuitable embraces, including those of a music master by whom she was to have a baby. It fell to Tchaikovsky to deal with her confinement, at a safe distance from gossip in Paris, only to find the child stirring his emotions in a near-paternal way. Just as he would flee Russia and its musical circles for Florence or Paris only to be drawn back by excruciating homesickness, so he would abandon the problems created by his immediate family only to be tugged back by the need to be surrounded by their warmth.

How he managed to write any music at all during these years might well seem a mystery; and indeed the level of production was low by his standards, and the works were seldom among his finest. They include, nevertheless, two operas, a piano concerto, three orchestral suites and the *Manfred* symphony, as well as a good many smaller pieces. Brown describes the operas as fluently as in previous volumes, with a full synopsis and musical analysis. He is somewhat wary of *Mazeppa*, though he rightly insists that it is "by no means a lost cause"; and though one can hardly dissent from his dismissive attitude to *The Maid of Orleans*, he could perhaps have explained it by more far-reaching reference to the demands of the Paris Opéra, on which Tchaikovsky clearly had one eye, and the consequent influence of Massenet and Gounod.

The failures are not excused, even when they have become popular hits. However, Brown does suggest that the banal *Italian Capriccio* is a result of Tchaikovsky insulating his nerves from experiences that might have benefited his creative powers. This hardly seems tenable with a composer whose capacity to turn his back on reality could lead him to such happy results with the roccoco and fairy-tale. As for the notorious *1812* overture: Brown does break a small lance for this "thematic ragbag", and indeed Tchaikovsky himself, in a letter not

quoted here, later reversed his original low opinion of the piece.

Brown also strikes a blow for the cantata *Moscow*, as well as (more predictably) the *Serenade for Strings*, on which he writes well. The work was the occasion of an exchange of letters with Taneyev that is the clearest statement of Tchaikovsky's position in the Slavophile-Westernizer debate. He argues that since Russia had, in a famous phrase, been tied to the tail of Europe by Peter the Great, it was now impossible to tear her away without doing violence to her art. Yet Tchaikovsky, "the most Russian of us all", in Stravinsky's phrase, can show his artistic nature in such glimpses as the fascinating description of him sitting for hours in front of a Raphael, oblivious to pattern or design and needing to appreciate it by identification with its characters. Instructors in the Tretyakov Gallery to this day proceed along similar lines.

Brown is aware, to the point of apology, that much in the way of trivia or the humdrum has to be used to give a fair account of Tchaikovsky during these years; but he has used his material skilfully. His main sources are the invaluable *Di i gody* documentary biography and the letters, which have appeared in various editions. These are inconsistent, not only changing with their editors the policy about what can be included or not, but sometimes varying in their presentation (in matters of reproducing italics, for instance). Tchaikovsky writes vividly and often amusingly, though he puts on a more self-conscious air when presenting himself to Nadezhda von Meck: Brown translates with a nice feeling for these differences.

His own analyses would doubtless have startled the composer. There is no questioning Brown's clear-headedness in discovering and appreciating the often elaborate forms of, in this volume, the Piano Trio, Second Piano Concerto and *Manfred*; but some of the diagrams are of such complexity as to need quasi-three-dimensional representation. Are we on



Yousuf Karsh's photograph of Anna Rubinstein's hands (1945). It is reproduced from Karsh: A fifty year retrospective (200pp, with black-and-white plates. Secker and Warburg, £27.50. 0 436 231050).

the brink of pop-up musicology?

He also has a weakness for cipher. There is no real evidence that Tchaikovsky used them, and it is too easy in this game to find what you are looking for. Faced with an untypical detail in the Second Suite, Brown wrangles with it until he gets three family names out of it, Praskovya, Anatol and Tanya. He does this by using their German forms, turning what he wants upside down or back to front, mixing out the awkward bits, using the first three letters only of two names and breaking up the third to surround them ("the family bond", "the embracing love of the mother"). He has overlooked something, though. If, using this system, we re-order the first three notes of the name-cipher, then taking the second three and the last two (transposed), we get the name David Brown. Clearly Tchaikovsky was sending posterity a message of appreciation of his finest biographer and critic.

realize with belated shame how carelessly I have been abandoned by others to worry and uncertainty, and what a miracle it is that I have created such works under circumstances such as these— including the one I am presently engaged upon (*Die Meisterlinger*). It was a miracle, and the world stands shamefully condemned for its treatment of this insufferable egotist.

Wherever Mann speaks of Wagner and Hitler, he places inverted commas round the latter name, but what the implication of that is one is left to guess. Briefly, in a letter to *Common Sense* for January 1940, having said, "The enthusiasm Wagner's music engenders, the sense of grandeur that so often seizes us in its presence, can be compared only to the feelings excited in us by Nature at her noblest, by evening sunshine on mountain peaks, by the turmoil of the sea", he goes on:

Yet this must not make us forget that this work, created and directed "against civilization" (Nietzsche's phrase), against the entire culture and society dominant since the Renaissance, emerges from the bourgeois-humanist epoch in the same manner as does Hitlerism. With its *Wagnerian* and its alliteration, its mixture of roots-in-the-soil, and eyes towards the future, its appeal for a classless society, its mystical-reactionary revolutionism—with all these, it is the exact spiritual forerunner of the "metapolitical" movement today terrorizing the world.

He had been wiser three years earlier, when, addressing an audience in Zürich that was about to attend the *Ring*, he said:

It seems to me impossible to speak of Wagner today without voicing a protest against such abuse (as Nietzsche) as the artistic prophet of a political present that would like to mirror itself in him? On certain tips there are despicable plagiarisms, purloined from the vocabulary of Wagner's artistic past and the future, the author of the *Ring* did not transcend the age of bourgeois culture in order to exchange bourgeois values for a totalitarianism that destroys mind and spirit. The German spirit has left everything to him; the German state nothing.

It seems to me as clear as anything can be about Mann: that it is, not very, that in aligning

Wagner with "Hitler" during his American years he was indulging in what Heller, in *The Ironic German*, refers to as the "deliberate well-meaningness and studied simple-mindedness" of his political exhortations.

The centre of this book, the one wholly indispensable item in it, is the famous essay now translated as "Sorrow and Grandeur of Richard Wagner", previously, and I think preferably, known as "Sufferings and Greatness". Much of it was delivered in various European cities as a lecture to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Wagner's death, and it provoked a protest, perhaps organized by Hans Knappertsbusch (the facts are less clear than they are made to appear in the editorial matter), from the "Richard Wagner City of Munich". It is interesting to have the printed, and Thomas Mann's reply, as also his lengthy and superb rejoinder specifically to Hans Pfitzner, who disgracefully signed the protest; but these documents contain nothing about Wagner, and are only a depressing witness to the cultural mood of Germany in 1933. The essay itself, long widely known as the single finest tribute to Wagner ever written, finally leaves no doubt whatever as to the depth of affection and understanding that Mann brought to Wagner, both as artist and as cultural phenomenon. It is contemporaneous with *Joseph in Egypt*, and shares the radiant and witty geniality of that marvellous book. If one employs the usual criteria for the nicety of a written utterance, there can be no question that this is the most deeply felt, as well as the most intimate and moving, thing that Mann wrote on Wagner. As always, there are elements of critique, but as each is considered Wagner's love of luxury, his demagogic powers, his primitivism—Mann adroitly turns it into a further ground for devotion to "probably the most formidable talent in the entire history of art", his term for Wagner in a letter of 1927. As Erich Heller himself puts it at the beginning of *The Ironic German*: "What would be the worth of critique if it were not sustained by our kind of affection or another, an aesthetic striving to justify itself before reason and vindicated by the findings of critical judgment?"

# An invasion delineated

George Zarnecki

DAVID M. WILSON  
The Bayeux Tapestry: The complete tapestry  
in colour  
236pp. Thames and Hudson. £45.  
0580 234477

The Bayeux Tapestry is not only a major medieval work of art of great originality but is also considered to be an important historical source for the Norman conquest of England and the events leading up to it. The narrative begins with Edward the Confessor sending Harold on a mission to Normandy, then follows Harold's journey by land and sea, his capture by Guy, Count of Ponthieu, his rescue by Duke William of Normandy, their campaign in Brittany, Harold's oath of allegiance to William, Harold's return to the court of King Edward, the king's death and the burial in Westminster Abbey, all under construction, Harold's assumption of the English throne in breach of his oath to William, the appearance of Halley's Comet as a prognostication of future dramatic events, the Norman invasion of 1066, the Battle of Hastings, the heroic death of Harold and the flight of the English survivors. The story of Harold's oath, on which William's claim to the English throne was based, is given great prominence, clearly

because the Tapestry was intended for a Norman audience. The Tapestry was commissioned by William's half-brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, between 1070 and 1080 for his palace in Bayeux, though on certain facts it was displayed in Bayeux Cathedral. It is a unique example of the secular art of the period, giving invaluable information about contemporary life.

The last book on this famous textile appeared under the editorship of Sir Frank Stenton in 1957 and this was reprinted in 1965. The present venture is the result of the recent cleaning and remounting of the Tapestry by leading experts under the supervision of the French Ministry of Culture. At the time, a new set of colour photographs, reproduced in the book, was taken. The removal of the nineteenth-century lining gave scholars the opportunity to study both the front and back of the textile and to determine the extent of past restorations. It is reassuring to learn that the original colours have not faded, for those on the back, which were never exposed to the light, were found to be in the same condition as on the front. The Tapestry is now exhibited in a specially converted building close to Bayeux Cathedral.

Published, by chance or design, at a moment when Halley's Comet can be seen again as it was in 1066, the present book is bound to be an immediate success. The new plates are superb

not only as a reliable record of the colours but also in the illusion they give of the texture of the smooth linen and the rough surface of the wool embroidery. It is inevitable, though a great pity, that these lavish colour reproductions, spread across seventy-three double pages, are unable to take account of complete scenes, with the result that many compositions are cruelly cut, as for instance, the oath of Harold, in which Harold is shown on plate 26 but William, witnessing this solemn and crucial event in the story, is on plate 25.

In spite of its name, the Bayeux hanging is not a tapestry but an embroidery. For the convenience of its needlewomen (probably nuns), it was made up of eight pieces, making a strip some seventy metres long. Only in one instance is there a miscalculation, for the width of the upper border on two adjoining strips (plate 15) is grossly out of alignment. From this it can be deduced that these two sections of the Tapestry were not executed in the same workshop, where the mistake would have been easily detected and corrected.

Past writers have made telling comparisons between the Tapestry and illuminated manuscripts and have come to the conclusion that the designer who prepared the cartoons for the Tapestry was a Canterbury monk. David Wilson, in his short, lively and eminently sensible text, is not entirely happy about this, and does not exclude the possibility that the design

was made in Winchester. The relief of disputed date and subject-matter which Martin Biddle excavated at Winchester and which provides the closest parallel for the Tapestry, certainly makes this claim plausible. Sir David also argues against Dodwell's theory that the Tapestry was inspired by contemporary chansons de geste and instead seeks the inspiration for it in Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry, such as *The Battle of Maldon*, recording a disastrous battle of an Essex ealdorman against the Scandinavians in 991. In his commentary on plate 12, which depicts a small figure holding the horses of Duke William's messengers to the Count of Ponthieu, Wilson writes: "I feel rather attracted to the idea that Turold is the bearded dwarf and is the artist of the Tapestry". Since the name of Turold applies to the messenger rather than to the dwarf servant, this is unlikely. What proves beyond any doubt that the dwarf is not English but Norman is that the back of his head is shaved. This can be seen on the Tapestry over and over again but always among the Normans. Since the designer of the Tapestry was an Englishman, he is certainly not the Norman dwarf, and in any case why should the designer of the Tapestry represent himself as a stable-boy in Ponthieu? However, there are very few points in the text with which one could disagree and the book can be warmly recommended for both its beauty and its sound scholarship.

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# Remainders

## Eric Korn

A good month for cowboy buffs, chaparral chaps, aficionados of the world as a Western. Especially enjoyable was Corazon Aquino in the Calamity Jane part, sweeping the rascals out of town at the head of an aroused crowd of People Like Us; I less liked the epilogue, where Ram Rawgun, head honcho of the big rancheros, who only took agin El Corrupto and his gang at the penultimate frame, says how he just doddit all for you little folks out there, and now he'd like to go and beat up on a few Comanches.

No, I haven't been to the Philippines, not as such, though I identify with them of course, admiring Philippine geography, Pilipina linguistics, Filipino food; once, in an hour of domestic stress I attempted to distract people by snacking on a fertilized duck egg, the blue-plate special from my local but ephemeral Tagalog takeaway (Filipino restaurants don't seem to last in London, and it may be the food); but even my omni-hospitable gorge, which smiles on silkworms and jellyfish and gapes like a baby scallion on a mess of elver stew, rose like a hackle at the prospect of a snootful of heak and pinfeathers.

And only this minute the postcard I sent home from Borrego Springs, CA (a vintage year for the creosote bushes, thank you) has arrived a week after I did, with (I hope it is just coincidence and not a heavy-handed nudge from the CIA) the magical superscription MISSENT TO MANILA. It could be the title of the noisiest of film noirs, with von Stroheim as the world-weary warlord from upstate Panay, and Dietrich as the Lady who is known as Luzon, the first film shot entirely through a bamboo shutter. Or it may be the opening of a remorselessly weltschmerzliche, zeitgeisty biopome:

Mis-sent to Maella in his fourteenth year  
He learned to wield the kris and scorn the cross  
Farming to Suffolk, till the soil turned sere  
He rode the punch, and found a doss in Diss.  
Alone In Buda, time of Beta Kun

But I was in Haiti, in the depths of Papa Doc, when a faulty electric sign over the forum Customs Shed cried "DUVALIER - ADX ET OGRES". Forget Kingsley Amla's recent wise words about the fallacy that fictional characters have "originals", forget Greene's disclaimer ("boiled up in the kitchen of the unconscious

they emerge unrecognizable even to the cook"): *The Comedians* was like a guidebook. There was Greene's Petit Pierre, a delicate little journalist (subversive? Government spy?) whose real name was Jolicoeur, who wrote knowing little paragraphs about tourists in the *Petit Courier*; the rum cocktails were made by limping Joseph, who, like Tiny Tim, did not die; we swam in the pool in the Carpenter's-Gothic hotel with the Barrymore suite, though there were no dead Cabinet Ministers in it when we swam. Pigs rooted among the unfinished architecture of Duvalleville, for which the money had not so much run out as run away. An economic mission from the Organization of American States was staying there: earnest slightly bystertical men trying for months to find a way of getting some of the money to the people who needed it. At last some sort of arrangement had been come to, there was to be a ceremonial signing, the President himself would appear ("And I shall have to shake his hand", complained one of the economists with disgust). As we sat at breakfast among the carpentry and bougainvillea, spooning up avocado and grapefruit, a ten-year-old boy in neat shorts (Jeunesse Duvalierienne?) appeared with a message for the delegates. The President had a cold and the meeting was postponed. . . . We had a plane to catch just after breakfast, and left the experts to their consternation; they may have stayed there for years. I don't think I dreamed any of this; but I admit that when the movie came out I thrilled with recognition until someone told me it had been shot five thousand miles away, in Beain. I hope Graham Greene gets to go back, too.

Last Thursday I was privileged (I have a television set) to watch two of the most spectacular literary-astronomical encounters of our time. On one side James Burke and Patrick Moore escorted spacecraft Glotio to his rendezvous (or rather his Comet-Halley-vous) with the hairy wanderer of the spaceways; on the other Martin Amis was fired into a close orbit around Saul Bellow's Planet, and the two discussed whether this modern world under its bright technological sheen was not just a great dirty snowball. The pictures that were coming back, all parties assured us, although exciting, were untrustworthy, falsely coloured, in need of enhancement and distorted by the medium of

television itself. When the going got tough, it was the scientists who cracked. For twenty hilarious minutes it became increasingly clear that they didn't know where they or the spacecraft were or when: there seemed to be a time-lag between London and Darmstadt; "We've passed the points of minimum distance and maximum danger" affirmed James, trying to ignore the reader across his legs that showed forty-thousand kilometres to go; behind him appeared ravishing red and green blobs, like an early Jonathan or a late Karel Appel; no one would tell the commentators whether the pictures were coming straight out of space or out of storage. Was Glotio still painting away industriously or had he blown off course? "A superb evening for Europe - and Mullard Ltd" opined the expert from Mullard. Then did that mean that things were still working? No, not necessarily. By contrast, the novelists remained cool, confident and coherent. I know whom I'd trust to pilot me through the eternal silences.

I write, when I do, groaning and sweating with incapacity, like a bantam trying to lay an ostrich egg, or more forcefully, a kiwi trying to lay an Apyornia egg, clucking and cursing while the unfledged, uncoupled chick is already fossilized in my (strictly literary) oviducts; sometimes it takes a morning of labour and travail and digression and Angst, a tide of crumpled paper ascending from feet to knees, before I light on *motus justus* like "cheque herewith" or "sorry for delay". Am I really sorry? If not really sorry, do I want it thought that I am sorry? If I don't want it thought that I am sorry, do I want it thought that I want it thought that . . . whining with doubt I touch firm ground and it shimmies away like jelly in a plate; I palpate the rocks of certitude and they turn to mud or melted chocolate. How many Ha in "with"? Is the word "delay" English or what: run it round the mouth a few times and it turns Venusian. Isn't "herewith" an Anglo-Saxon legal term for the right to shear moles on your cater-corner's arse? Wasn't Herewith the Czech a Viking who darily led his fleet of draged-beaked foam-riders up the Vltava, stupor slyochorum, who ruled Bohemia until deneferated by hiv omw' thegnas at the Castle of Stary Gezy? The painfully constructed confection of phrase and sense turns to a pesse pudding of delirium, a verbal junket, what

Elit called the Word in the Desert.

So I'm envious of the fluent, and above all envious of such superlative persons of the *Logos* who can conjure a whole book, or better still publishing concept, out of net-a-lot. There's a man bere with an anthology of short stories in railway stations, it's to be called *Interstices*; there's a video, a sit-com, a washing-powder and a set of give-away tumblers, and ER has made him a huge advance; then again there's a man who published a dictionary containing a few hundred words, albeit long ones, along with the letters he wrote to authors to ask them why they used words he didn't know like pinguid; and their (often) patetot repies.

I recall vividly the exact traffic island in Chinatown where I conceived planned, plotted, copy-edited and all but completed (*italic* was heavy) *My Hundred Best Wok Jokes*. And I've been cuddling it to myself all these years.

We got all kinds of wok: punk wok, Brighton wok, wok of ages with the cleft-bellied wok populi, our cheapest line. We get wokwok in bewoqued wok, Ayers wok for a *Wokwok* epistemologist, woks in beauty like the night, all night wok shops (that's wok around the clock), and just a closer wok with thee. We get gay jokes (a wok oo the Wilde side), lousy cannibal jokes (wokking my baby back bone), Tantalus jokes (my daddy woks me) and even Irish literary jokes: what do you get if you stir-fry a mess of linguistic roots? *Finnegans wok*, be the powers.

The trouble with this kind of associative lava-flow (out of the cradle endlessly woking), is that ten seconds of creative meander provides enough restaurant osmes (the wokkery, where e'er you wok, wok a little faster) to last an entrepreneurial (the wokwork) lifetime, without counting the abstruse ones like Peters (on this wok I shall build) or the head (don't knock the wok, Lambeth wok, Madame will you wok).

Well, there you are. It's off my chest, the torch is passed, and now I shall never get out little book with illustrations by one of those monsyllable cartoonists "brilliantly caught by GLUP's inimitable pen" just in time for the moon cake, and year-of-the-andion market. It could have been called *Woks in the Wind* or *Woks at praeterea Nilil*, or *Gelling your Woks off*, depending on the market segment we are targeting.

Just the soy-sauce tie-ins alone would have made me rich.

night, disguised as men or as prostitutes. Almost as if she were determined to accumulate enough material for a lifetime of work. Ding Ling entered into scandalous romances, drank too much, and became the common-law wife of the revolutionary writer, Hu Yepu. During the late 1920s she published short stories about the sexuality of young women, explicit for their time and place that she became instantly famous - not to say notorious. "Mang Ke" and "Miss Sophie" are both about "liberated Noras" and are parallel attempts to deal with the question of the Chinese critic who wondered what happened to Ibsen's heroine after she leaves home.

Mang Ke, the daughter of rural gentry, comes to Shanghai and plunges into the glittering, dangerous world of the cinema. Energetic, ambitious, unsatisfied, filled with romantic and even erotic hopes, she soon discovers that the men she meets think only of sexual conquest. Eroticism followed by disappointment is the theme, too, of "The Diary of Miss Sophie". The heroine is a young victim of tuberculosis, who dismisses a worthy lover, preferring a sexual liaison which soon disgusts her. But Miss Sophie, who considers life "my personal thing", looks back on her passionate affair as a valuable experience, and decides to "die quietly". In the novel, *Wei Hu* (1930), supposedly about the conflict between love and revolution, the activist Wei Hu gives up his love for the cause. But Ding Ling pays far more attention to human anguish than to political dimensions. Indeed, it was her concentration on emotion in the midst of social upheaval that made Ding Ling's reputation; it was also, though, that would eventually bring her in collision with the party.

continued on page 313

# Letters

## 'Hitler's Apocalypse'

Sir, - Alan Milward's review of my book *Hitler's Apocalypse: Jews and the Nazi legacy* (January 31) is a depressing example of how bias and intolerance towards contrary views can sometimes distort the judgment of serious scholars. His extremely muddled attack on my book contains a number of major errors, misunderstandings and distortions which require correction.

First, his distinction between Hitler and the Nazi Party is quite irrelevant to the question as to why the Jews of Europe were murdered. Within the top leadership of the Party there was no opposition to this policy, and Milward himself concedes that Hitler "determined the massacre of the Jews". Second, on key ideological questions like the fate of the Jews, Hitler was not just "one part of a complex, polycentric, governmental system" but its pivot and driving-force. Since the school of historians called "functionalists" do not discuss the ideological content of Nazi antisemitism in any depth (which is one of the major themes in my book) but focus more on the mechanics of how the Holocaust came about, there was no need for me to engage in polemics about their work - which I respect but disagree with.

Contrary to what Milward says, I do not at all ignore context but carefully examine the international and domestic factors which prevented Hitler from even attempting to carry out his exterminatory design between 1933 and 1939. There is a whole chapter in my book on these constraints. Did Milward read it? To suggest, as Milward does, that 2,000 years of Christian Judeophobia were irrelevant to the Holocaust is an incredible statement that no serious scholar of antisemitism can uphold. Not only did Nazism consciously build on this heritage (for example, the use of the blood-libel, the identification of Jews with the Devil, etc), but, as I show, Hitler was projected to the public as a Christian antisemite and identified himself with an Aryanized Jesus. Milward not only whitewashes Christian responsibility but also ignores the other side of the coin - my explanation as to how and why Hitler later turned anti-Christian - airily referring to "equivocal double-talk", instead of addressing my argument.

It is quite false to say that I make a "great leap" in time from Hitler to the present. On the contrary, I document how Nazi patterns of antisemitism immediately after 1945 contaminated the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as well as the Arab world - where the seeds were already present during the Nazi era itself. As my book makes clear, this "Protocols of Zion" style of antisemitism was grafted on to already existing indigenous patterns of Jew-hatred in these societies.

Milward's manner of quoting from my book is highly tendentious and undermines the credibility of his whole review. A quotation from Haj Amin el Husseini relating to the affinity between National Socialism and Islam is presented as if I wrote that the *Führerprinzip* and other Nazi attitudes are "essentially Islamic virtues". What kind of scholarship is this? Contrary to the impression Milward gives, I do not call Khomeini, Saddam Hussein, Brezhnev, Gomulka or Idi Amin "fascists", or "Nazis" or even "heirs of the Nazis". Nor do I denounce "much of the world as antisemitic or 'anti-Zionist'". But I do show how these dictators have cynically exploited theories of a Jewish world-conspiracy under the mask of anti-Zionism, to defame and blacken the Jewish people. I also document how the bloodcurdling post-1945 rhetoric calling for the extinction of Israel is a continuation of Hitlerian antisemitism. Milward has only to consult United Nations documentation and to listen to

some of the speeches made in that body today, to assure himself that my documentation is only the tip of the iceberg.

Finally, what is one to make of a reviewer who can write that Israel "behaves abroad [sic] with a cruel brutality at least the equal of that of its enemies"? I have some sharp criticisms in my book for certain Israeli policies, but this kind of generalization lets the cat out of the bag.

It is indeed saddening that Professor Milward should have used my book for this kind of settling of accounts instead of confronting fairly, squarely and on its merits the evidence that I produced for the continuity of a radical and murderous antisemitism into our day.

ROBERT WISTRICH  
Department of History, Hebrew University, Mount Scopus, Jerusalem.

## Norman MacCaig and Hugh MacDiarmid

Sir, - In Anthony Thwaite's assessment of the things I've written (March 7) he says I write in Edinburgh Doric. I don't.

Doric means Scots and I've never written a line in any language other than English.

Edinburgh English? Now what could that mean?

NORMAN MACCAIG  
7 Leamlington Terrace, Edinburgh.

Sir, - What a pity Anthony Thwaite's appreciation of the poetry of Norman MacCaig (March 7) is disfigured by an attack upon Hugh MacDiarmid! The bellicose persona cultivated by the late author of *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* had its unpleasant aspects, but I am not aware that Christopher Murray Grieve ever did, said or wrote anything to merit a charge of megalomania ("repellent" or otherwise).

The phrase "Scottish-Chaucerian antiquarianism" is also puzzling, and not only by virtue of its resurrection of a discredited epithet for the fifteenth-century Makars. The Middle Scots ingredient in their twentieth-century successor's poetic vocabulary is extremely small. Perhaps Thwaite means merely that MacDiarmid wrote in Scots. If so, he repeats himself, as he has already contrasted the older poet to MacCaig on the grounds that the latter "uses no Lallans". Or perhaps he does not know what he means.

Thwaite admires MacCaig for "checking up on appearance and reality". If he checks up on the reality of MacDiarmid's poetry from the years 1922-32 he may also find MacCaig's "loyalty" to his colleague less bewildering. There too a sardonic, reductive turn of mind is revealed, along with a remarkable facility for the creation of images. No doubt *A Drunk Man* will appeal to Thwaite, who approves of verse with "plenty of wit, slyness . . . and a lot of jokes".

Other parallels between the work of these poets may be noted. For instance, the almost tender evocation of cosmic bleakness in such popular MacCaig pieces as "Toad" and "Stars and Planets" strongly recalls characteristic effects of MacDiarmid's earliest lyrics in Scots. These correspondences are less a matter of influence than of a profound kinship of mentality between two Scottish writers who were on terms of intimate friendship for thirty years.

PATRICK CROTTY  
7 Hackett's Terrace, Grattan Hill, Cork, Republic of Ireland.

## Hardy's Poems

Sir, - Robert Walls is wrong in saying, in his review (March 7) of *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy*, that all Hardy's volumes of poems were "originally issued by Macmillan". His first two volumes, *Wessex Poems* (1898) and *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1902), were first published by Harper and Brothers in London and New York.

Incidentally, to present "The Complete Poetical Works" in three expensive volumes without *The Dynasts* is like issuing Wordsworth's complete poetical works without *The Prelude*.

RUPERT HART-DAVIS  
Marble Hill, Swaledale, North Yorkshire.

## Disease and the Novel

Sir, - It was because I shared Iain McGilchrist's view of the importance of language and of the individual that I objected to his criticism of the nature of Kleinman's language to divert attention from Kleinman's substantive points about the experience of the sick individual. What, more generally, I am inviting your readers to consider is that language, individual and sickness exist in a social context which many good novelists have presented and which medical anthropologists in a modest way strive to analyse, both directly and at second hand. I hope those of your readers not already well informed on the subject will not be misled by the implication that medical anthropologists remain in their armchairs untouched by their own experiences of health and sickness and those of their friends, relatives, doctors and nurses. Most of them are involved in at least two, and many in three, of these areas of social experience as well as in direct observation and participation in hospital, clinic and household at home and abroad. Like nurses, they may see less death than doctors but more dying. Doctors are often trained to discount their own personal experience and that of their patients (illness), as well as culturally determined patterns of the performance of ill-health (sickness), and are taught to concentrate on the pathological disorder (disease). Sometimes as patients we benefit from this; at other times we suffer for it. Novels, anthropology, even apparently discredited literary criticism, as well as the reflexive experience of the healing professions, with, of course, adequate command of language and concern for the individual, can, in my view, all help to clarify these social complexities.

RONALD FRANKENBERG  
Centre for Medical Social Anthropology, University of Keele, Staffordshire.

Sir, - Iain McGilchrist's intemperate rejoinder (Letters, February 14) is a tendentious misreading of what I wrote (Letters, January 31) to challenge his flawed interpretation of illness. Whatever transient feelings of Anglophobia were stimulated by the vicious culture bias in his letter were put to rest by Ronald Frankenberg's unexpectedly supportive intervention (Letters, February 28). (Whoever can bring Frankenberg and me together is a friend to medical anthropology.)

Having spent the last fifteen years in research and practice with more than 2,000 patients suffering from chronic illness, I do not think I need McGilchrist to introduce me to "medical territory". But perhaps he would benefit from a more extensive introduction to clinical practice that took him out of the high-technology, intensive-treatment setting of the tertiary-care hospital where the patient he describes lies dying and into the community where the vast majority of the chronically ill live with their disabilities, seek medical care, and confront suffering and death. Stroke in the former setting, notwithstanding McGilchrist's statement to the contrary, is an acute disease; in the latter it is chronic, an inevitable way of life.

I invite McGilchrist to see my patients with me, accompany me on clinical teaching rounds, spend hours, as I do, interviewing chronically ill patients in their homes. It would help him to become an empathic witness of the lives of sick people (of human misery, more generally). That fundamental clinical experience should convince him that illness is inseparable from social conditions and personal meaning, and as a consequence meanings, relationships and actions come to influence reciprocally the biology of disease and therapy. This is what I meant by the "symbolic reticulum". Intensive listening to patients' accounts of their illness experiences can also liberate a physician from an overly narrow technical orientation that dehumanizes patient and practitioner, and from a common falling in the care of the chronically ill, delegitimation of the personal experience of suffering.

Professor Frankenberg is not the only one to detect a disturbing omen in McGilchrist's case vignette, that, as a neophyte physician, he has already learnt how to transform the subjectivity of the sick person into diseased object. Social-science terminology is useful to under-

stand this untoward outcome of socialization into the culture of biomedicine and can reform the teaching of doctors. It provides uncommon sense about medicine as social praxis because anthropological and sociological concepts force us out of the taken-for-granted, common-sense world view taught in medical school and mirrored in the media. This is what ethnography is meant to accomplish, and social-science teaching in medicine is at heart ethnographic, an attempt to place the student in the patient's world, to help him or her see how the broader sociopolitical system contributes to ill-health and constrains the health-care enterprise. Would McGilchrist inveigh against the uses of biological terminology as uncommon sense to talk about neurophysiology of stroke? The purpose of applying the social sciences as a complement and corrective to biomedical science is to rethink medical theory and practice, and the education of doctors as a human enterprise. When medical students like McGilchrist learn to overvalue "hard" biomedical formulations of morbid anatomy and scoff at "soft" social-science formulations of illness as meaningful experience we are all losers: patients and families, physicians and researchers, medical students and teachers. Most of medical practice, notwithstanding the claim of biomedical science, is concerned with the "soft": chronic illness, distress, the margins of wellness, the body as an indexical symbol of the social sources of human misery. The challenge is to educate student physicians in the community - the proper teaching setting - not the hospital. Here literature should be the ally of ethnography.

Mr McGilchrist, I can assure you the danger is real enough and it is present, right now, here in the house of medicine that you have entered; but it is not we who are the enemy.

ARTHUR KLEINMAN  
Department of Anthropology, Harvard University, William James Hall, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

## Frank Hampson

Sir, - Of course Frank Hampson deserved a better book than the one I wrote for him (*The Man Who Drew Tomorrow*, reviewed by Ruari McLean, March 7). All his impossible life Frank deserved better than he got. Why, then, did I fail?

Because by the time I got to him Frank Hampson had been utterly destroyed. He was incapable of trusting either friends or strangers. He couldn't talk about Dan Dare; couldn't, because to rehearse the story again would have driven him mad - I mean insane! He told me: "I don't trust you, and I won't be beholden to you." His son told me: "I must actively dissuade you from writing this book." His wife could only say: "Oh what's the use - let it go!" What kind of betrayal could turn a comic-strip genius (every week he made a million children bappler) into a bounded, tortured soul? It was mental torture: he had to watch while moguls destroyed his creation and fobbed him off about money. And Ood knows, there was enough money in Dan Dare for everyone.

So terrified was Hampson of "passing on this corrosive bitterness" (as he put it) that he resigned himself to silence.

Marcus Morris and the rest were all honest do-gooders, keen to give little boys a paper to admire. So they latched on to Hampson's Dare and stuck fourteen pages of (mostly derivative) mediocrity to it in the hope that we schoolboys would become better people. The truth is told in one sentence spoken by Marcus Morris to Hampson when the artist stopped drawing Dare because he could earn more drawing the advertising strip "Tommy Walls". "Frank," Marcus begged him, "please go back to drawing Dan Dare, because without him there won't be a Tommy Walls."

Who then, Mr McLean, "created" the comic?

ALASTAIR CROMPTON  
9 The Drive, Esher, Surrey.

The 1985 H. H. Wingate Prize (for a book on a theme of Jewish concern), administered by the National Book League, was awarded to *The Temple Scroll* by the late Yigael Yadin (reviewed in the TLS, May 3).

## Jonathan Milsky

Before her death three weeks ago at the age of eighty-two, Ding Ling, author of "Meng Ke", "The Diary of Miss Sophie", *Wei Hu* and *The Sun Shines over the Sangan River*, was thought of as the leading Chinese woman novelist of the twentieth century. In China, literature is a serious business, and few writers there have been taken more seriously than she was. Among Chinese writers she had also spent probably the longest time as a political prisoner: she was notable for having been a captive of both Chairman Mao and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. Her official obituary, in the party's self-serving style when it wishes both to praise itself and to apologize, claimed that "despite her frustrations Ding Ling kept her faith in the Communist Party and in the people". It then listed the blakest moments in her career: 1933-36 - imprisoned by the Guomindang [Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists]; 1955 - wrongly charged as

anti-Party [this is one of the Chinese equivalents of treason]; 1957 - wrongly labelled Rightist and expelled from the party; 1966-76 - during the Cultural Revolution, kept in prison and isolated; 1979 - spared, rehabilitated, and returned to party membership.

The delicacy of her case is apparent in that the party did not dare to set her free until 1979, when Mao had been dead for three years. The vicissitudes of her life between 1930 and 1979 were a tremendous embarrassment to the leadership - a close look at them blurred the party's distinction between the Chiang and Mao periods; if anything, the post-revolutionary years turned out to have been worse for Ding Ling, and for writers generally, than the Guomindang period. She herself indulged in only one public moment of bitterness at the end of her twenty-two-year detention - "In the 1930s, the Guomindang banned my books. After 1958, we ourselves banned them." But in the same statement she remembered the other writers who had been "smashed", many of them old comrades no longer alive. "Did they

all really deserve to be treated like dung?" The "we ourselves" were Mao and his disciples, many of them still in charge in 1979 (as they are today). But this was two years before the party's verdict on Mao's twenty-five years of "tragic error". This was the judgment in which his old comrades were to concede that they had been involved to a limited degree. In 1979, therefore, the best that could be said about Ding Ling was that it was good that she had returned from "obscurity"; in fact every writer in China, as well as most readers, knew exactly what had befallen her. The single allegation rejected by everyone was the Gang of Four's assertion that Ding Ling had been an spy for Chiang Kai-shek.

In fact she had been a revolutionary from the beginning. Born in 1904, and left fatherless very young, she was brought up by her feminist mother, a teacher in a "modern" school who joined the Communist Party three years before her daughter. Ding Ling and an equally liberated school friend, modelling themselves on Ibsen's Nora, prowled Nanking's streets at

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# COMMENTARY

## Oriental operations

Roderick Whitfield

The China Trade 1600-1860  
Royal Pavilion Art Gallery, Brighton until April 6

Nash's Royal Pavilion in Brighton, at present swathed in scaffolding during restorations, is an appropriate venue for an exhibition of the China trade. Portraits of people and places as well as samples of the varied products, from porcelain to furniture, that proved so popular in the West, are on show in two densely packed galleries. The exhibition is confined to trade with Britain, excluding the wider European or American perspectives. Tea and the china from which it is drunk, a British institution since the eighteenth century, have their place: an enormous teapot (said to hold thirteen gallons) is set on a platform of tea-chests in the first display case. The tea-chests, from Shanghai, show an unbroken trading tradition, but even today in certain vagueness as to the exact origin of Chinese products seems to be indicated by the fact that the bowls of Twinings tea displayed below the portrait of Thomas Twining are of Japanese and not Chinese porcelain. Paintings of Canton - until 1841 the only place other than Portuguese Macao where foreign traders were allowed to stay and erect warehouses - show the waterfront with the British factory and its improvements - a colonnaded porch which was first enlarged and then given arches at ground level. It is a pity that a longer section of the great scroll from the library of George III could not have been displayed, to show the whole waterfront. Other paintings, mainly by anonymous Chinese artists, show (as Sir George Staunton, the first British ambassador to China, commented) "a brilliancy of colouring, the more surprising, as it is found to be owing to the more patient and careful levigation of the same pigments which are used in Europe". There are views of Macao, the anchorage at Whampoa, the rapid growth of Hong Kong, jewel-like with ships at anchor in the bay, as Hong Kong still manages to appear today, and the Shanghai Bund together with the view from behind it, showing the extensive mansions and gardens already built by about 1860.

Less familiar and equally instructive are the two paintings depicting the trial of the Neptune's sailors who were accused of murdering a Chinese citizen in a brawl in 1807. These are interesting, not just for the formality of the proceedings, with the Chinese magistrates seated in the centre of the hall of the old British factory, but for the portly gentlemen who are identified as the supercargoes, responsible for negotiations between the Western traders and the Chinese merchants of the Cohong. However demanding their jobs may at times have been, their prosperous appearance recalls George Chinnery's remark that the former employees of the East India Company "spent six months in Macao, having nothing to do, and the other six months in Canton, doing nothing". Chinnery himself is here, in a splendidly idiosyncratic self-portrait, from the National Portrait Gallery, hung near "Spoilum's" portrait of Captain John Watts, in which every outline appears concave, as if enlarged from a miniature. Spoilum (or Spiller, or Spilum) has recently been identified as Guan Zuolin from Nanchang, who visited Europe and America and was one of the first Cantonese artists to execute portraits in the Western idiom. A whole cast of characters is assembled through the works of these Chinese painters and their successors, some of whom, like Lamqua, could turn their hand as well to a delightful version of Ingres's "La Grande Odalisque" as to decorous portraits of Chinese ladies and American sea-captains buttoned up to the neck. By contrast, the tidy sets of twelve pictures illustrating the growing and processing of tea, cotton, etc., have an air of unreality which is hardly surprising, as the artists had no personal experience of the operation: and happily introduced a broad balustraded walk with potted plants in the middle of the cotton harvest. A notable exception is provided by the two paintings showing the arrival and the unpacking of the tea in the warehouses at Canton;

these alone show the gloomy reality and the ceaseless labour of the shipping season, in a vast darkness where the only light comes from the doorway on the alley outside, through which the architecture of the waterfront is just recognizable.

Those of the traders who took the trouble had plenty of opportunity to pursue their interests, especially in natural history, despite the impossibility of travel in the interior. Drawings such as those commissioned by John Reeves, Assistant Tea Inspector from 1812, were to be followed by a host of albums of flowers, fruits, boats, butterflies and other subjects, the best and earliest of which are often on European paper. This was preferred by the customers to thin Chinese papers until they were seduced by the novelty and velvety texture of pith "paper", which is actually a veneer and far more fragile than either. Reeves's dis-

comment and direction, as well as the way in which he was well served by his Chinese informants, are admirably clear from the sheet of drawings in watercolour of crabs, part of a series of crustaceans, molluscs and fish now in the Natural History Museum and far less common than the flowers and fruit in similar collections. The Chinese common name of each species is inscribed below them: the diminutive *laoh xi* or tiger crab, the incense-burner crab, the mountain crab: not a land-dweller, this, but with a shell curiously formed like an archaic representation of a mountain, such as might have been done by a Chinese artist in the sixth century AD, or on the back of a bronze mirror of the Tang dynasty.

John Reeves's industry, though here seen in such a small sample, makes one regret the absence of another figure, more colourful but equally enthusiastic about the country out-of-

bounds behind the Canton waterfront. A. E. van Braam Houckgeest, once a captain in the Dutch navy, who emigrated to South Carolina and took United States citizenship, was appointed Chief of the Dutch East India Company in Hong Kong. Van Braam's collection was dispersed at Christie's on Friday, February 15 and Saturday, February 16, 1979. The superb collection was made by Mr Van Braam during his late Residence in China, and in the Course of his extensive Travels through the Vast Empire. The principle Part consists of Forty large Volumes of Beautiful Drawings, on about One Thousand Eight Hundred Sheets, of which, Four Hundred are different Views of the Chinese Empire. . . . Items still stored in the British Museum (two volumes of drawings each of landscapes, chiefly in south China), and in various public and private collections, and it is a pity that he could not have been included.

The interests of van Braam, Reeves and others were chiefly scientific and commercial, or simply curious as to the manners and customs of the Chinese: there was little or no opportunity for exploring the fine arts, especially painting and calligraphy, as they were understood by the Chinese themselves. The only subject in the traditional Chinese known as a panel of ink bamboo, consigned to the ceiling in a mid-nineteenth-century view of Twining's workshop. But there were other contacts with Chinese culture besides tea and porcelain: the second room of the exhibition contains silver, furniture and textiles, among which two of the most handsome examples are a bureau bookcase and a secretaire bookcase, designed after European models but made by Chinese carpenters using native joints and the same hardwoods glowing in surface and colour, as we now know in traditional Chinese furniture. Traditional painting was similarly adapted to European needs in the production of past sheets of hand-painted wallpaper, a fine example of which from the Royal Pavilion is shown in view, though sadly hidden behind a showcase of silver.



Arthur Brown with a Chinese servant (left) and May Violet Brown with her ayah, by the Shanghai artist Chow Kwa (1830-80), rare examples of domestic portraits of the children of an English company director in Shanghai. They are reproduced from *The China Trade 1600-1860* by Patrick Connor (158pp. Brighton: Royal Pavilion Art Gallery and Museum, £4.95, 0946723 009), the catalogue of the exhibition reviewed here.

## Egyptian motifs

Julian Rushton

GIUSEPPE VERDI  
Aida  
Grand Theatre, Leeds

Opera North's new *Aida* does not shrink the issues of one of Verdi's most sombre conceptions, in which the tragedy of Aida, Amneris and Radames is played out against a background of racial and cultural, as well as military, antagonism. This is admirably conveyed in this production by costumes appropriate not to ancient Egypt but to the time of the opera's composition. The legacy of this period is with us still, but contemporary relevance is insinuated rather than thrust upon us. Amonasro appears a swarthy Bedouin, Pharaoh a "civilized" governor distinguished not by the crown of which he speaks but by a smart red fez; Radames, lightly bearded despite the composer's concern that Egyptians must be clean-shaven, is a Europeanized officer. Amneris and her richly appanelled retinue complete a picture of colonial decadence, fortunate to resist so determined an invader. Philip Prowse, who both designs and directs, nevertheless deploys traditional Egyptian motifs to build strong images appropriate to the action: long urns, a small pyramid for Amneris's vigil, a tent-like interior, obelisks, and, especially, nags. Acts Three and Four are oppressively dominated by steps which enforce a dramatic geometry as tight as it is intelligent. These later acts take place in semi-darkness, enhanced by an unexpected contrast. Instead of the sober colour familiar from his previous productions in Leeds (*Orfeo*, *Teneraria*) Prowse has embellished Acts One and Two with a fine variety of reds.

Act Two is without elephants and camels. The set is a vast balcony, filled with the royal party and the greatly enlarged chorus. There is

no room even for a token procession. This is forgivable when the chorus and orchestra are in full cry, although the hero's entry on the lower level, otherwise occupied only by Aida, is absurdly modest. The ballet problem, however, has not been solved. There are no dancers, doubtless a useful economy; another might have been the elimination of their music. The shorter ballets are given over to plausible ritual and to stylized play among the fingers. The main ballet, during the procession, is devoted to Amneris's retinue seen tormenting a blindfold Aida in full view of priests, king and populace (some of the audience, not surprisingly, interpreted this as comic relief). The music is undoubtedly seductive, but it would have been better to omit than obscure it by such gratuitous business. It was, moreover, unfair to Aida, who at this point, although she is so stage, ought to be conserving her strength.

Fatigue may indeed have caused vocal problems for Wilhelmina Fernandez in the third act; on the first night she seemed over-tense and lost control of a more high, quiet passages. It was at this point too, that David Lloyd-Jones's committed conducting might have relaxed its pace and allowed fear to rein in the singers. The woodwind of the English Northern Philharmonia deserve the highest praise, notably the oboe; the strings' only fault is that they are too few, so that the opening of the act sounds not magical but fuzzy. Fernandez, an Aida all the more attractive for not emphasizing self-pity, recovered to sing the entombment scene finely. Here, however, the usual roles are reversed; the libretto requires Aida to die, but it is Radames who appears to sink lifeless in her maternal arms (she is noticeably the taller). Frederick Donaldson is vocally secure rather than exultant. "Celeste Aida" is rigid; and thereafter he makes a relatively slight impact. His defiance of Amneris in Act Four, however, is dramatically a high point; and he achieves serenity in the final duet. Keith Latham is a

forceful Amonasro; but the triumph of the evening belongs to the Amners of Sir Burgess, versatile in voice (and happy in overdoing the chest register), mercurial in gesture and facial expression. She even conquers the stairs, scuttling up and down in the first act, undeterred by her long dress, displaying feverish intensity worthy of Strauss's *Elderflut*. This will be a splendid *Aida* when it has settled down a little; further performances in Leeds during March are followed by six in April, divided between Manchester, Nottingham and Hull. They should not be missed.

Recent volumes in the series of opera guide published by John Calder in association with the English National Opera and the Royal Opera House include Number 33, *Janáček: Káťa Kabanová* (128pp. Paperback, £3.95). This contains the libretto of the opera in Czech and in English translation by Norman Tucker (*Káťa Kabanová*) and essays by John Tyrrell and Charles Mackerras. Other volumes in the series are Number 34, *Wagner: Parsifal* (127pp. £3.00); Number 35, *Wagner: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (127pp. £3.00); Number 36, *Wagner: Die Trübsal der Heiligen* (127pp. £3.00); Number 37, *Wagner: Die Walküre* (127pp. £3.00); Number 38, *Wagner: Die Götterdämmerung* (127pp. £3.00); Number 39, *Wagner: Der Ring des Nibelungen* (127pp. £3.00); Number 40, *Wagner: Die Valkyrie* (127pp. £3.00); Number 41, *Wagner: Die Walküre* (127pp. £3.00); Number 42, *Wagner: Die Walküre* (127pp. £3.00); Number 43, *Wagner: Die Walküre* (127pp. £3.00); Number 44, *Wagner: Die Walküre* (127pp. £3.00); Number 45, *Wagner: Die Walküre* (127pp. £3.00); Number 46, *Wagner: Die Walküre* (127pp. £3.00); Number 47, *Wagner: Die Walküre* (127pp. £3.00); Number 48, *Wagner: Die Walküre* (127pp. £3.00); Number 49, *Wagner: Die Walküre* (127pp. £3.00); Number 50, *Wagner: Die Walküre* (127pp. £3.00); Number 51, *Wagner: Die Walküre* (127pp. £3.00); Number 52, *Wagner: Die Walküre* (127pp. £3.00); 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236pp. Calmann-Lévy. 75fr.  
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The Great Wall of Japan? This novel's piquant title is explained as soon as we read, with sinking heart, the Kipling epigraph, "Oh East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet . . .". Michel Huriet gives us the now-familiar tale of all that divides East and West, a wall more complex than the so-called "language barrier", which does not exist unless we erect it ourselves.

The story begins in Tokyo in 1973, when international flights from France still started at Orly, and still arrived at Haneda, which is where we find good-looking naval attaché Julien d'Elven, awaiting the arrival of his pretty young wife Florence, a pampered bourgeoisie from decent, dull Dijon. Julien's posting to Tokyo and Florence's desire to stay in Paris to dabble in sculpture have kept them separated for about half a year. In the meantime, Julien has dutifully studied Japanese language and customs, and made a "conversation exchange" friend of Hiroshi Tanaka, a journalist with the financial newspaper *Ketzi Shinbun* (which M Huriet nipsells all through the book); he is enjoying his life in Japan, and even manages to endure a constant round of social events, both diplomatic and military. But Florence is not so happy. Either through unwillingness or indifference, she is unable to tune into Japan. Her devoted husband drops her round his favourite streets, shops and restaurants. He takes her to Kamakura, to visit an ancient potter, in a vain attempt to rekindle her interest in sculpture. Like everyone else, they sweeter and suffer in the rainy season and the clammy heat of summer. They make excursions, including a disastrous one to Shikoku — the locals giggling

with embarrassment, the dubious pleasures of country inns with their boiling-hot public baths, sinister blind masseuses and prying maids.

Florence becomes increasingly depressed and alienated. She makes a half-hearted attempt to learn calligraphy, but spends most of her time lying on the floor reading French magazines and listening to classical music on the radio. Julien orders fresh clay for Florence every day, and in the end she is provoked into modelling a few heads partly inspired by ancient *Auriviv* figurines that he tries to explain to her at an art gallery. Tanaka offers to write an article about her sculpture for his paper, but she refuses to be interviewed, and instead smashes each sculpture as soon as it is half-finished.

The inevitable happens: amid the delighted title-tattle of the foreign community, Florence flies back to France, and Julien has the regulation night out with a geisha discreetly provided by Tanaka at his newspaper's expense. Tanaka

becomes a more significant figure in Julien's life, though in the book he remains perhaps intentionally drab and dreary, a typical workaholic "sarariman". The ultimate seal is put on their strangely abstract and bloodless friendship when Tanaka invites Julien to dinner at his apartment; on the bookshelves Julien notices the *Manifestes du Surréalisme*, but it is not until towards the end of the story that Tanaka reveals that his wife is writing a thesis on André Breton. Julien had taken the self-effacing, dim, dutiful wife to be just another domestic drudge, and this small point indicates the extent of his self-sufficiency and complacent condescension towards what he considers to be Japanese stereotypes.

Julien is posted back to Europe, and the second part of the novel takes place mostly in France and Britain, where Tanaka turns up as his newspaper's representative in London. They continue their friendship, and have many long discussions about trade friction, individualism and the lack of it in the Japanese, the

nature of love and marriage, Japanese industrial superiority and the devotion of workers to the continuing success of their companies. Julien and Florence divorce, and she returns to Dijon to marry a suitable businessman, leaving behind her "cultural clutter" when she gives slide lectures on Japan. Julien has several affairs, finally settling on Sabine, who is stolen from him by Tanaka. The Japanese are sent back to Japan, where he is to undergo rigorous de-briefing in the remote northern seaport of Otaru — the sort of ritual brainwashing that has to be endured by Japanese who has spent any length of time abroad. It is a rather sad ending.

Huriet's novel is interesting and suggestive, full of valuable insights into Japanese ways and the Japanese mind, and symptomatic of the intense curiosity shown by the French to anything to do with Japan — though it is not of the same high quality as Raymond Vourf's *Elans de Nigola*, published last year, on a similar theme.

# Projections from a messy present

Lorna Sage

MARGARET ATWOOD  
The Handmaid's Tale  
306pp. Cape. £9.95.  
0 204 02348 9

"I tell, therefore you are . . .". *The Handmaid's Tale* is told by Offred, a prisoner of the twenty-first-century future, reaching out to a listener who may or may not exist. Margaret Atwood has given her a disembodied voice-in-the-head — "Tell, rather than write, because I have nothing to write with and writing is in any case forbidden" — which, you soon realize, is especially reasonable, because her culture has decreed that she is all body:

We are all for breeding purposes: we aren't courtesans, geisha girls, courtesans. On the contrary: everything possible has been done to remove us from that category. There is supposed to be nothing entertaining about us. . . . We are two-legged wombs, that's all: sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices.

Middle America, undermined by a (Caucasian) fertility crisis, fuelled by fundamentalist religion, has returned to "traditional values" and Old Testament polygamy. In the born-again Republic of Gilead everyone has a role and a uniform, except the ubiquitous Eyes of God, who hunt down Gender Traitors, Baptist guerrillas, Jews, black Sons of Ham and Unwomen for liquidation, repatriation, or transportation to the Colonias to pick over toxic and radioactive waste dumps. Gilead is a garden suburb with an endless, vague warbling fought on its borders, but inside a perfect, primary-coloured peace, all space marked out — Wives in powder blue confined to drawing-rooms and gardens, Commanders of the Faithful driven to their think-tanks in black limousines, middle-aged Marthas in dull green to do the cooking and cleaning, an army of Guardians (also green) to police the streets and act as chauffeurs and gardeners — and another army of Red-Red Handmaids, a corps of nuns in scarlet who serve those wives without children as surrogate mothers.

Not that the narrative lays it out like this, all at once. The trick with dystopias is to establish the quality of ordinary, everyday life in hell, and it's only gradually that one pieces together Offred's world, as she struggles to recall what she can of the implausible "time before" (she seems to be a child of the 1980s) and to discover the cracks and inconsistencies in the picturesque nightmare she inhabits. In one memorable but perhaps too-cartoonish scene early on, she and her companion Handmaid Ofglen (new names are patronymics) sneak shocked glances from behind their white nuns' blinkers and veils at a party of Japanese tourists.

The skirts reach just below the knee and the legs come out from beneath them, nearly naked. . . . Their heads are uncovered and their hair too is exposed, in all its darkness and sexuality. . . . The tourists want to take pictures, the Handmaids turn away silently, shaking their heads, the interpreter explains that "the women here have different customs", and Offred recalls with a shudder "That was freedom. Waterized they used to call it." Recall is difficult, now that "the flesh arranges itself differently" around her empty (guilty) womb; she also remembers the horrors and absurdities of a life naked and exposed, the climate of sexual competition and distrust.

What Atwood is after here — one of the book's persistent polemical projections — is the tendency in present-day feminism towards a kind of separatist purity, a matriarchal nostalgia (Offred's mother, we discover, went it "Woman's" just a woman's strategy for getting "reclaimed the night" that threatens to obliterate with the language of conservatism and "Tradition". This in turn threatens to join forces with right-wing demands for "traditional values", law and order, national and racial chauvinism. Atwood is good on Offred's own ambivalent nature, and on the power of survival mythologies — there's lots of capital "M" in her native Canada, her book on Canadian literature was called *Survival*, and in *Surfacing* (1973) she explored the desire to disappear into silence and innocent animal nature — as the dangerous edge of oblivion.

Other things. *The Handmaid's Tale* is a revisionist look at her more visionary self. It's also a novel in praise of the present, for which, perhaps, you have to have the perspective of dystopia. Offred realizes "I want everything back the way it was", her confiscated daughter, her husband, the rows, the insecurities, the "Issues" she wishes she'd paid more attention to, the signs she wishes she'd read. . . . In particular, these last: the messy present, goes the moral, is a moment (possibly the last) when we still have the currency of individual freedom — portable cash, portable and preservable words, something to bargain with, something to exchange. The Gilead régime, we gather, makes its way to power through a combination of television evangelism, computerized money supply and generalized illiteracy, as well as a (sketchy) coup that wipes out the President and Congress. And one of the first loopholes Offred discovers is the illicit pleasure of playing Scrabble with her Commander, who likes a bit on the side:

This is freedom, an eyeblink of it. *Limp*, I spell. *Gorge*. What a luxury. The counters are like can-

dis. . . . Humbugs, those were called. I would like to put them into my mouth. . . . The latter C. Crisp, slightly acid on the tongue, delicious.

Readers looking for hard-core futurology will of course be (partly) disappointed. It's only in the "Historical Notes" from the twenty-second century at the end that you get that sort of background to Gilead — an East-West pact that leaves super-powers free to concentrate on internal enemies, a CIA destabilization manual deployed for domestic purposes, and soon. And there remain worrying loose ends in the main body of the narrative too: Offred's rediscovered friend Moira, for instance, would surely not have been a Handmaid-candidate, since we're told that she has had her tubes tied "yearago" — but she's here to show that sisterhood doesn't mean separatism, she's gay in

every sense (sceptical, irreverent, funny, "dirty"), a familiar supportive side-kick from earlier Atwood novels. And making the Commander a puzzle, mildly perverse ex-market-researcher seems to be cooking the books, rather, in favour of "understanding":

To be a man, watched by women. . . . To have them putting him on, while he himself puts them on, like a sock over a foot, onto the stub of himself, his extra sensitive thumb. . . . Surely even patriarchal male sexuality can't feel this strange? Offred's most difficult task is to persuade herself that her eventual reader — her real partner in crime — may be a man:

If you happen to be a man, sometime in the future, and you've made it this far, please remember: you will never be subjected to the temptation of feeling you must forgive a man, as a woman. . . . This gnomic stuff is a measure of the difficulty Margaret Atwood has set herself in *The Handmaid's Tale*: not only synthesizing a future (which she does, minnily, with aplomb) but putting the present together. It's already not easy to set up a game of heterosexual Scrabble.

based on the Kate Chopin novel. His wife has left him. His beloved elder son has blown his mind and his chances with drugs; his smart, heartless younger son seems set for a fine acting career. Walker is afraid of dying, rugged by regrets he can't face and can't reject. He thinks of his life as "trash", has "the taste of death and ruin" in his mouth. And so, needing what he calls a dream, the flicker of escape and excitement, he decides he will drive down to Baja California and see his old schizophrenic girlfriend Lu Anne, who is playing the leading role in the film being made from his script. No one thinks this is a really good idea, least of all Walker. But no one stops him, and he can't resist it. Lu Anne, a gifted, intelligent, distraught actress, and one of Stone's real successes among his characters, is in very bad shape, about to crack entirely. She has stopped taking the pills which control her hallucinations, she weeps, screams, goes seamy, sees again the dark, winged creatures she calls the Long Friends. They whisper to her from mirrors and corners, telling her she is tainted, doomed, that they know her better than anyone. Her husband has left with their children, ostensibly for a holiday, but she knows he won't be back. She and Walker, addled with cocaine and booze and misery, leave the location and take off on a binge of memory which ends in a shabby apocalypse on a Mexican mountain. Stone is reaching for tormented heights here; but only finds mess and dogged pain.

The movie location, and the scenes in Hollywood before Walker takes his trip, are very well observed, and the dialogue is sharp and funny, full of dips and gags and lively idioms, the reverse of the solemn prose which surrounds it. These are scared and witty people, moving so fast because they don't want to stop and think: The sardonic director, his distinguished, once black-listed father, his pretty, pert wife ("I love it when they say *before sound*"), the visiting magazine writer, the bodyguards, fixers, hangers-on, all add up to a small, bitter world, a place full of guilt and energy and panic: the legendary Hollywood, alive and biting, on a wonderfully synthetic set which has brought Louisiana to the West Coast of Mexico. There is no refuge here.

And this, I take it, is really Stone's theme: life on the edge, away from all hope of home, the terrible appeal of destruction. In one of the rare moments when he is not soaked in self-pity, Walker thinks of his once loved elder son: "neither his humour nor his grace had served when the drugs came like a punishing wind to sweep away all the unprotected childre". Lu Anne's humour and grace don't serve either. She too is an unprotected child, abandoned by her husband, and driven further into madness by Walker's return. One of the book's most disturbing moments is a memory she has. She knocks on her father's door in New Orleans. She is quite small, this is the first time she has knocked on a door like a grown up. Her father, drunk and red-eyed, opens the door and doesn't see her. She says, "I'm down here, Daddy." He looks down and says, "I thought it was somebody real."

# A trip to tormented heights

Michael Wood

ROBERT STONE  
Children of Light  
294pp. Deutsch. £9.95.  
0 233 97884 4

Hollywood, a drab enough sprawl on the physical map, has only lurid colours in the imagination, all doom and glitter. It often seems as if it is about to offer a cautionary tale, but it isn't. Its lure is just the lure of glamorous trouble, of the trouble of glamour, the story of people who have it all and throw it all away. It is, for a writer, a territory haunted by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and not only because he worked there and wrote *The Last Tycoon*. Fitzgerald owns this aspect of the place, because he is the master of the American crack-up.

Robert Stone, the author of *Dog Soldiers* and *A Flag for Sunrise*, powerful novels which sought out trouble spots in Vietnam and Central America, knows the sort of thing he is after and knows his mentor. He even sounds like Fitzgerald at times: "He held her and he was thinking that this was his golden girl and that she was in his arms and that they could never have peace or a quiet moment or a half-hour's happiness." But the alluring trouble doesn't quite come into clear focus — partly because Stone is too busy fighting off clichés, or rather, losing his less than whole-hearted battle with

them. His characters, for example, involved in making a film of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, which ends with the heroine swimming out to sea and not coming back, sit and watch clips from famous drowning movies: *Humoresque*, *Craving Home*, two versions of *A Star is Born*. They are doing their homework, but the effect is to bury them in repetition. I think Stone wants to suggest that you can always do a scene again, if you get it right, and this must be true — indeed Stone himself brings it off in his novel's strong ending, which takes the ache the astute reader will already have guessed. But for much of the time Stone is lost in mythology, tired ideas about people and their affections and their difficulties, and his language doesn't help. He is keen on words like "aqueous" and "antimicrobial"; phrases like "dark enchantment" and "sinister magic". His sentences have an ungainly and monotonous gait: "Waking, he saw . . .", "Dressed, he went . . .", "Shown, he stepped . . .", "Caught, he squinted . . .".

But the chief reason for Stone's lack of focus on his trouble is his male lead, who is perpetually bewildered and pretty dull. The book judges him to be cruel and confused, but in an interesting way, and it's the interest I can't catch. Gordon Walker is a coke-sniffing, heavy-drinking actor-writer in his forties. He has recently played King Lear — the title role, no less — onstage in Seattle, and some ten years ago wrote a script, only now being filmed,

# A model muddle

Roz Kaveney

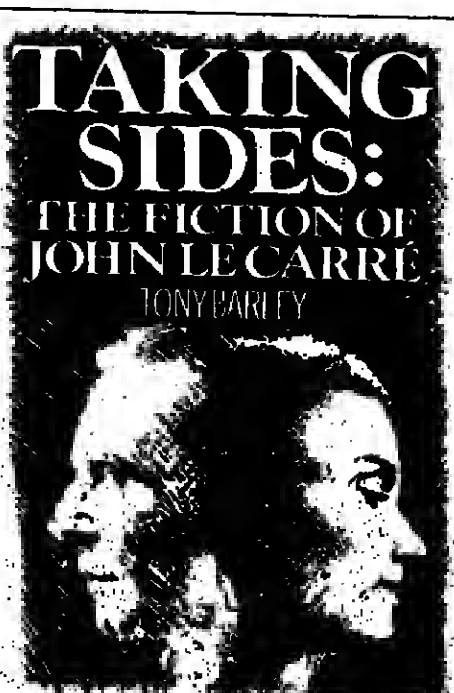
FREDERICK BARTHELME  
Tracer  
126pp. Dent. £9.95.  
0 460 04701 9

The sheer slowness — sheer as in nylons as well as the merely emphatic — of Frederick Barthelme's second novel marks a moderate advance over his already impressive *Second Marriage*. There is here the same seemingly arbitrary proliferation of mildly surreal incidents — a long narrative of sexual parenole about dwarves, an aggressive hotelier with an electronic box monitoring his brain patterns, a preacher talking of the joys of self-delusion, a small child called Magic who pretends about candles — as top-dressing over the usual sexual muddle of people who have discarded morals but not basic politeness. Here, though, the brevity makes them into a coherent picture of the randomness of contemporary American life, rather than — as seemed to be the case at times in the earlier novel — a lot of good extra bits from abandoned short stories, stuck in as padding.

Like many recent American novels this one deals in a sort of charming amorality whose charm is partly that of freedom from traditional and possibly irrational guilts; partly that of

intense tiredness with an existence in which taboos are forgotten rather than ever actually broken. Martin visits, in one of the less fashionable resort towns of Florida, his sister-in-law Dominica, who is trying vaguely to set up a reconciliation between him and her sister Alex before their divorce becomes final; her good intentions in no way preclude her taking him to bed.

Much of the strength of the book comes from Martin's male sense of exclusion: from the shared world of the sisters; even Alex's jealous resentment is largely expressed in a private language from which he is essentially and forever excluded. Meanwhile, odd incidents seem to imply that Dominica's ex-husband is trying to pressurize her into abandoning her share of the motel she runs for him; then he turns up on a motorbike and everyone decides that he is so much nicer these days than he used to be that she must be wrong. The campaign of harassment is never traced to source, but Dominica does indeed leave the motel to work on her relationship with Alex, the reconciliation having predictably failed; Martin departs by plane in the same mood of bafflement that he arrived in; acidic and jokes seem more closely linked than we had imagined. Quasi-incest and cabalistic signs in the motel car-park are ultimately dot-seen as more important to the character than another motel resident's lectures about panicle-making.



John Le Carré is acknowledged as the best spy novelist of his time by both readers and critics. Tony Barley presents the case for giving the novels serious critical attention. He looks at the clarity and complexity of Le Carré's political insight, and the way he links political issues and personal crises.

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# The explosive return

Nicole Irving

HELENE CIXOUS  
Angst  
Translated from the French by Jo Levy  
219pp. Calder. Paperback. £4.95.  
0 7145 3905 8

Much of Hélène Cixous's *Angst*, published in 1977 and now lovingly translated, could be described as incomprehensible. Most things in it and most things about it are difficult. A woman writes, in order to take stock of her life. We recognize familiar events and problems: dependence on another; the need to be loved; the sense of betrayal which begins at birth, when warmth and security are abruptly denied, and the realization that such moments of denial and loss, always shocking, will recur. The writing, however, is fragmentary and chaotic. The woman clutches at odd details and dates, apparently in an effort to establish order or meaning. Patterns emerge, but they seem to lead nowhere. From the outset, the woman is unable to have any dealings with the outside world: the abandoned child "shrinks to the size of a small volume". Her flesh disappears inside the book. The prose mirrors an inner disorder and frenzy. But if we read on, it is because we sense that a battle is being fought which may bring results.

In her theoretical feminist writings, Cixous has called for a new language as the precondition of a new reality. Men's reality, men's language, the "phallogocentric" world as she calls it, is attempting to knock down and escape from. If the New Women, arriving now, dare to create outside the theoretical, they're called in

by the cops of the signifier, fingerprinted, remonstrated, and brought into the line of order that they are supposed to know", she wrote in "Le rire de la Méduse" ("The Laugh of the Medusa", reprinted in *New French Feminisms*, Harvester, 1981). The reader should, then, respect the difficulty of the text, and avoid approaching it with sets of theoretical tools. We can note the less than Cixous's indebtedness to psychoanalysis and the war she wages against it and its alien terminology, as the beloved (or hated) man, God, and mother merge.

That Cixous, in her journey through *Angst*, is frequently extraordinarily violent, should come as no surprise. "When the repressed of [women's] culture and their society return", she has said, "it's an explosive, utterly destructive, staggering return, with a force never yet unleashed and equal to the most forbidding of suppressions". This violence means that reading her can be painful, but even in the most brutal imaginings we feel she is touching on nightmares and obsessions which are present, if suppressed, in all of us. Cixous constantly places us on the edge of just-intimated knowledge, where she herself seems to be as she chases death, her demons and loves. The world which the many selves of this fiction inhabit is never the reassuring if nasty one we go about our business in; although occasionally a fleeting text might be grabbed at, an incongruous panscape guiltily craved for, a cryptic touch of humour let loose. Her text has a rhythmic pattern, moving from obscurity to relative clarity, from the bodily (erotic and otherwise) to the sometimes punning metaphysical, from violence to calm and occasional tenderness, and at the end, she reaches a wholeness.

The reader wonders, though, at the truth of this. The honesty of the text may act as a kind of guarantee, convincing us that in the last few pages a strongly desired, just-glimpsed reality takes shape. But the depths of the matter faced by Cixous — mortality, and our society's face of it — preclude anything as simple as a resolution. If such a thing is possible it lies, surely, in the process of writing itself.

Cixous's attempt to share this process with her reader is a courageous one. She lays herself open, and manages to provide hope while admitting a necessary failure. Ultimately, it is hard to question the appropriateness of the tactics she chooses, to worry about their tacticality, to doubt the usefulness of the writing words or besitate over their divisive qualities: she overcomes all inclinations to do so.

"Londres-Création", a colloquium organized by the British Council and the Centre Georges Pompidou in association with the publication, Autrement, will take place in the "petite salle" of the Pompidou Centre in Paris on Wednesday, March 26 and Thursday, March 27. At 7pm, Wednesday, Angela Carter, Adam Smith, Jones, Gilles Berbedette, Tony Carrière and Patrick Maurès will discuss "The British Novel Today". Thursday afternoon (2.30 onwards) will be devoted to the theme "Cixous and literature", with a showing of Ker McQuinn's 1983 film *Ghost Dance*, featuring Derrida, followed by a discussion between John Berger, Angela Carter, Ker McQuinn, and Jean-Claude Carrière, at 7pm. On Friday, Redmond O'Hanlon, Michael Ondaatje, and others will discuss travel writing, and at 9pm John Barger, Don McCullin, and others will discuss "Writing between two languages".



# American lessons for English ends

Michael Edwards

CHARLES TOMLINSON  
Collected Poems  
351pp. Oxford University Press. £15.  
0 1921 9745  
Eden: Graphics and poetry  
79pp. Redcliffe Press, 49 Park Street, Bristol  
BS1 5NT. £5.25.  
0 948265 00 0

"People just don't look at things, do they?" Charles Tomlinson asked in a recent radio interview. The challenge seems simple enough. Tomlinson's career of constant alertness, of forever becoming "awake to what is there", is exemplary, and in its way heroic. The effects are evident throughout this long overdue edition of his *Collected Poems*, which reprints all the volumes from *The Necklace* of 1955 to *The Flood* of 1981, along with a single poem from his 1951 pamphlet, *Relonous and Contraries*. Regrettably, the publishers have not included his latest volume, *Notes from New York*, or provided an index.

Tomlinson's first widely noticed collection was *Seeing is Believing*, whose initial appearance in the United States, in 1958, remains as something of a reproach to the British poetry world. Its effusive title still holds for his most recent poems, and also makes clear that the otherness of the places and objects to be encountered in his work is a matter not of disquiet, as in the Absurdism from which he distanced himself from the beginning, but for exhilaration. In such encounters, the self — which always needs to be justified in Tomlinson's poetry, where the English puritan tradition is still active — is experienced not (or not only) by introspection but by attention, as if the true self were less a private inwardness than a relation of inner to outer. The first line of the first poem is: "Wakening with the window over fields". The worth of the self depends on the quality of the looking.

The energy of Tomlinson's poems goes into perceiving. Perception is guided by a figurative intelligence and by a varied sense of human desire and of human impingement on the world: an awareness of both mystery and history. Similarly with his graphics. *Eden*, which also includes a selection of appropriate poems and the fine essay "The Poet as Painter", reproduces twenty-nine graphics from the 1970s, when Tomlinson was creating some of the freshest and most arresting visual images in the country. Largely based on decalcomania and collage, and relying on variations of black and white, they are governed by metamorphosis, the theme of Tomlinson's Clark Lectures. Yet with their density of foreground detail and the

suggestion, beyond, of luminous space, they are, after their fashion, representational. By welcoming chance and by learning from Surrealism, they also seem to have made Tomlinson's writing more open to promptings from outside, and they suggest that a certain practice of Surrealism, which could have seemed anathema to the earlier Tomlinson, can actually be one way of deferring to what is beyond the will.

All the graphics explore the shifts between observing and imagining, and many of the poems too have that as their theme. A recent poem, "Their Voices Rang", remembers voices calling through winter trees and comments that, although they were speaking, "it seemed they sang", and so made of the trunks "a hall of victory". As in Wordsworth, "seemed" is not merely a concession to prosaic fact: the seeming song really does transform a nature into an architectural space, and Tomlinson characteristically asks what that can mean, so as to offer an explanation: "And what is that and where? / Though we come to it rarely, / the sense of all that we might be / conjures the place from air." "Conjures" surprises, and is presumably meant to, but one sees that the imagined place is conjured not out of thin air but from an air that is, as it were, arboreal and resoundable, and also that the word "sense" marries two of its meanings, so that one's mental apprehension of the possible originates in a faculty of the body, in this case hearing. A further question and answer: "Is it the mind, then? / It is the mind received, / assumed into a season / forestal in the absence of all leaves", locate the unwanted "where" as a place that is both cerebral and seasoned, where the mind is entered by winter trees, and winter trees by a mind which could clothe them with foliage.

Despite American and French influences, Tomlinson's way of seeing is very English; British empiricism does speak through these poems, but with subtlety and imaginative daring. Perception is enlarged by imagination, and the virtue of art is to move from "what is" to what "might be". That negotiation between the resistance of what is other and the transforming potential of the mind is also enacted in Tomlinson's language, which clarifies, I think, a fundamental question of rhetoric. His poetry is poetry in that it offers the pleasure of not calling a spade a spade: music is "a body one cannot see"; mushrooms, at the end of a poem about an almost magical quest, are "stepping stones across a grass of water". Yet the poetry also offers the pleasure of finding, for a spade, precisely the right word or combination of words, as if a perfect language were simply waiting to be learnt and applied. Most tellingly, Tomlinson also shows that the two impulses

— to name accurately and to name anew — only appear to be contradictory.

Strangely, when discussing other poets, it is usually as astringency that he chooses to emphasize. What he discovered as a young man in Pound's *Canto 2*, for instance — "Lithe turning of water, / sinews of Poseidon, / Black azure and hyaline, / glass wave over Tyro" — was, according to his book *Some Americans*, a "cleanliness in the phrasing". There is no mention of Poseidon and his sinews, but then this may be a sign of maturity: to have focused on exactness of technique, and imitated that, rather than try to emulate the poetry's imaginative power. Pound brings to mind the "relations and contraries" which Tomlinson has set up in his poetry between English and other writing, especially American. In volume after volume he has tacked between the two. His "English" poems are quickly recognizable. Some are based on a four-stress line — less a recovery of Anglo-Saxon measure, it seems, than a formal miming of natural alert speech — or even on the iambic pentameter. They may include rhyme or half-rhyme; their lines are sometimes alternately indented, and carry a visual suggestion of the couplet; their syntax can be highly elaborate. Other poems have an American appearance and movement, through a fastidiousness of diction, for example, encouraged by a reading of Marianne Moore, or through the importance given to the ends and beginnings of lines.

There are not quite, however, two distinct types of poem. Those that are English in their metre, and often their theme, may show an American "cleanliness"; American short-line poems frequently advance through roving rhymes and assonances. The American lineation of "Crow" reaches in its fourth line for an Old World phrasing:

The inspecting eye  
shows cold  
amid the head's  
disquieted indifference.

Even the triplets of many poems in *A Peopled Landscape* (1963), which look on the page like the triplets of William Carlos Williams, have a rhythm which is English, where iambic and the trochees into which they reverse play across the pattern:

He [a fisherman] knows his net  
but knowledge  
must reassess its ground  
to comprehend  
the mystery of fact  
supple in sunlight  
teeming from the sound.

Tomlinson is his own master, changing what he finds, using various American lessons for English ends.

Although from the beginning Tomlinson worked the English language for a new clarity in vocabulary, syntax and sound, and especially in the craft of the line, the reader also needs to see the historical English that already exists. And although Tomlinson has always found himself swimming against the tide of poetry being written around him, and he needed to find a way through what were to him the dead languages of others, this has involved at the same time finding his own way into a tradition of poetry already there. Such a route to originality is more difficult and less newsworthy than overt experimentation, but it enables the reader too to enter English poetry from new perspectives. In the *Collected Poems* one meets Pope, Coleridge and Wordsworth (the Augustan-Romantic dialogue is central) as well as more recent Americans, and others, in a new guise. In the graphics one meets above all John Sell Cotman.

This is one of the ways in which Tomlinson speaks for England now, while also bringing an English eye to foreign poetry, painting, landscape and history. He tells us something of what it is like to live on "this island", by testing the continuities between the industrial highlands and rural Gloucestershire; and between English and foreign settings both urban and natural. He also writes a political poetry which opposes apocalyptic and revolutionary "extremity" in the name of the richness of circumstance, and of civility. ("Civility," he "civility," is a recurring word.) His is a politics of right relationships within a whole larger than oneself ("reign" and "kingdom" are among his metaphors), a whole which includes the stresses of history and of geography, along with neighbourhood, dwellings, objects and individuals. It is a politics unlikely in appeal to any avant-garde, whether of the left or of the right, especially as his civility also has a profound religious dimension; his writing continues the oldest and most elemental pursuit of poetry: the search, through a sense of awe and mystery, for a human way of being in a world other than human.

The *Collected Poems* presents three decades' work by one of the finest native English poets since Hardy. It is not a mirror of our distresses: instead it explores the sources of strength and wills an ideal, approaching it through the disciplines, audacities, remonstrances, generosity of poetic technique. *Eden*, the *Translations*, the *Oxford Book of Verse in English Translation*, *Some Americans*, *Poetry and Metamorphosis* and now this *Collected*, Tomlinson is available as poet, painter, translator, anthologist, autobiographer and critic; the time has come for us to take the measure of his presence.

# New light on the Enlightenment

J. M. Roberts

FRANCO VENTURI  
*Relicenti riformatori IV: La caduta dell'Antico Regime (1776-1789)*  
Volume One: I grandi stati dell'Occidente  
463pp. Turin: Einaudi. L45,000.  
930605956

In the preceding volume of his majestically unrolling discussion of eighteenth-century reforming thought, Franco Venturi spoke of the "first crisis of the ancien régime". That was manifested at the periphery, in Genoa, Corsica, Sweden and Denmark, and in the 1760s, when Europe began to breathe again in the aftermath of the Seven Years War. In *La caduta dell'Antico Regime (1776-1789)*, the focus moves more firmly to the major states of western Europe. Of its five subdivisions, three are devoted, respectively, to England, Portugal and Spain, and France. In each of them, a case is made for the special significance of 1776. Then, argues Professor Venturi, can be identified the start of a new phase of Western crisis to which this book introduces us; it is the approach march to 1789. The story of the end of the ancien régime, though, will require a further volume. We are promised one which will set out the story of the Eastern monarchies in this period and the triumph of "republican patriotism".

There is a touch of Gibbonian self-consciousness about this programme and it is in a measure justifiable. As it moves towards its completion, the scale and sweep of Venturi's conception, as well as the range and detail of his knowledge, become more and more impressive. But the parallel should not be pressed. For one thing, the heart of Gibbon's subject was the decline and fall of an institution (or perhaps a set of institutions) whereas Venturi's ancien régime is much vaguer. Indeed, he has taken for granted the old liberal conceptualization and periodization of the eighteenth century. Yet it has undergone decades of kilometre-like nibbling by swarms of scholars; we now recognize much of the ancien régime to be still in full swing even in nineteenth-century France, where the most uncompromising assault upon it was supposedly made. As for Great Britain, it is very difficult to give meaning to the idea of an ancien régime at all, once past the Glorious Revolution — or even the Restoration.

Through comparison with Gibbon another point can be made which illuminates Venturi's own standpoint, and therefore the critical assumptions on which the work rests. Gibbon unraveled a story of the triumph of barbarism and superstition (as he saw them); Venturi's heroes, though, are the men of the future, the men who worked hard to bring about the decline of much which surrounded them in the eighteenth century and who, implicitly, were on the side of emergence from barbarism and superstition. Venturi has only a cool admiration for those who, like Necker, sought technical and (he would say) limited solutions to the problems of the French monarchy. His heart goes out to reformers who see visions and dream dreams of societies more tolerant, more egalitarian, bapelier — Diderot, for example. Such men are indeed worthy of admiration but the emphasis upon that side of the eighteenth century reveals a commitment to the tradition of liberal assessment of it. Venturi is never in any danger of pitying the plumage of the dying bird, and though that is possibly a cause we sense as much, it is possible to overlook the air of a gentlemanly look aimed directly at the poetry establishment. Christopher Reid is too good a poet to need the affirmation of so cosy a group.

This would be a knowledge like the reader's of one of Chekhov's three sisters, Katerina, dreaming of significance. Reid is dreaming of a freedom from triviality. Perhaps because we sense as much, it is possible to overlook the air of a gentlemanly look aimed directly at the poetry establishment. Christopher Reid is too good a poet to need the affirmation of so cosy a group.

*Tongues of Fire: An anthology of religious and poetic texts* introduced and edited by Karen Armstrong (Viking/Channel 4, £12.95, 0 670 80878 4), recently published, is an anthology loosely derived from the Channel 4 television series in which Karen Armstrong invited poets including Seamus Heaney and Craig Raine to discuss their favourite religious poems. Here the verse is arranged in a sequence of experience, not religion, as Herbert, Donne and Hopkins rub shoulders sometimes with, sometimes illuminatingly, with Sappho and Pindar. The eighteenth century was the forum, for

example, of a particularly intense discussion of Spanish and Portuguese affairs because of the presence there of many ex-Jesuits from the Iberian peninsula. At times, where the material is plentiful, Venturi is able to provide something like a continuing narrative of events wholly based on reportage. In other instances, he can focus only on a particular comment or commentator (Filangieri on the British constitution, for example). Always, though, his approach is likely to be revealing. It has the great merit of presenting a genuine historical account; that is, one set out in terms of contemporary judgments and not spilling over into the more analytical and categorical language into which the history of ideas is always liable to fall. (Incidentally, it thus also supplies interesting and unfamiliar detail; I did not know that the first review of *The Wealth of Nations* appeared in Rome.)

The price Venturi's method exacts from the reader is that it can easily lead to loss of bearings within the general argument. The picture which emerges in this book — or, rather, pictures, for the subdivisions focus selectively upon certain major areas and do not attempt comprehensiveness — is much too rich for summary. Some leading features stand out, it is true, and the book jacket is no bad start at identifying some of them. On the front is Trumbull's picture of the Founding Fathers and on the back Guardi's painting of a balloon over the Gluecca. We are clearly into a new age among whose major delineating characteristics are the emergence of a new nation as an extension of the old European world, and the accelerating impact of technology. Venturi, concerned with the work of reforming thinkers and statesmen, does not say much about the second; he writes about the balloon craze as he does about electricity, in terms of intellectuals' awareness of them, and this cuts him off from much of the positive impact of technological change on thought (yet it was, after all, not only an era of revolutionary applications of technology to the economy, but also one which saw the first use of the submarine and telegraph in war).

The emergence of a new nation — the infant United States of America — provides the focus of the first part of the book. Nearly a third of the whole, it is devoted to *Libertas americana*, as its title puts it. It is a good beginning. Not only was America the subject of intense debate among reformers (and Venturi amply demonstrates the range and enduring nature of their concern), but it is also a model instance of the age's expectancy and of the readiness of so many of its leading thinkers to believe in the possibility of better social and political forms, even if they could not be hoped for in the Old World. Raynal appears as a key figure — or, rather, Raynal plus Diderot and the others who contributed to his history of European aggrandisement.

Attempts to read the American future from the history of past republics may now seem merely curious, but the eighteenth century can hardly be expected to have assessed correctly influences of environment, tradition and technology whose sweeping power would take a century or more to become fully apparent. What is more, Venturi's purpose, in any case, is the way in which to talk about the Americas became a way of talking about Europe and, in particular, of criticizing the ancien régime. In this respect he easily justifies the attention given to Raynal, whose work, he happily suggests, with only mild and certainly pardonable exaggeration, should be seen as the *Encyclopédie* couched in narrative form.

America leads naturally to Great Britain, the subject of the second section of the book. Here Venturi seems less convincing in his integration of the English (there is not much about the Scotch contribution to the making of British thought in this period) with the European story. If, as he points out, 1776 brought the death of Hume (as well as the publication of *The Wealth of Nations* and the first of Gibbon's volumes), it is too sweeping and oversimple to register that event as the closing of "un intero ciclo del pensiero filosofico, politico e storico britannico". The year can be given a little more weight, too, as an epoch in reform. Bentham's *Fragment on Government* and Paine's *Commonsense* were published then. Yet ideology and intellect still eyed integration with the British political story, and these



Benjamin West's "The Death of General Wolfe", 1765, is reproduced from Helmuth von Erffa and Allen Suley's *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (606pp. Yale University Press. £50. 0 300 03355 9), which will be reviewed later this year in the TLS.

pages show that. The Irish problem, for instance, escapes (as it always was to do) categorization in terms of English debate.

Spain and Portugal are dealt with more illuminatingly. Olavides's condemnation is convincingly presented as a symbol of a changing atmosphere, as it was recognized to be at the time, and it is clear that much more weight should be attributed to indigenous sources than to the French Revolution in tracing the story of the failure of reform in Spain. In the neighbouring kingdom of Portugal, though, Venturi seems himself to recognize that we still do not know enough about the circumstances of Pombal's fall or the nature of the renouveau which followed. We cannot be sure of their significance. Yet the later 1770s were clearly crucial for both the Iberian countries. It was then that the nature of Spanish decadence became a matter of public debate and then that

reformers for the first time had to make up their minds clearly about the threat to liberty which a man like Pombal presents, for all the innovative benefits his rule may appear to offer.

Liberty was most easily idealized in its ancient republican manifestations (and no doubt we shall hear more of this from Venturi). In the 1780s the debate had already gone beyond this, though. It was pushed forwards by such men as Diderot, who believed that even the illusion of liberty — because of its inspirational and perhaps educational effect — was worth baying. But new figures less careful for liberty and concerned to turn ideas into a force for change were already appearing and the book ends with Mirabeau and Brissot as pre-revolutionary publicists, and with Linguet, the disillusioned philosopher.

Clearly it is very hard to bring so rich a book

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# Female, yes, but foreign?

Elaine Feinstein

CHRISTOPHER REID  
*Katerina Brac*  
47pp. Faber. £8.95 (paperback, £3.95).  
0 571 136141

The poems in this, Christopher Reid's third collection, are presented as translations from the work of an Imaginary Eastern European poet, Katerina Brac. She is a fiction, though the playful blurb leaves the possibility of her existence deliberately open. At the heart of the book is a delicate, dreamy sensibility which is very much that of Reid himself. So elaborate a deceit is certainly intriguing. The longing to be elsewhere, the glamour of 'exotic' exiles altogether outside the English literary world and its coteries, is, of course, wholly understandable. Translators, too, may stand accused of plundering the genius of spirits greater than their own; whose suffering they have not been forced to endure? Any poet so translated runs the risk of taking on an alien personality. Yet, as Reid well knows, his fantasy is of another kind: His Katerina Brac could never take her place alongside the great female poets of Eastern Europe. For one thing, the sensibility and the range of preoccupations he has invented for her are largely English. And the nature of

the lyricism pursued here makes it difficult to conceive of the forms of the poems as arising from the constraints of translation. Anyone who has worked to bring across the poetry of Tsvetayeva, Akhmatova and Yvonne Moritz into English, marvelling the while at the courage that sustained their achievement, may perhaps be forgiven some questioning of Reid's intention. What do these delicately clever poems gain from the fiction on which they are strung?

If we look at the very first poem in the book, which is immediately pleasurable to read (and undeniably free of the imagery of hysteria which thickens "Psa Soup", the first and title poem in Reid's last collection), we are offered a magical struggle of pale blue butterflies which settle in garden strawberry beds every year, at the same time, and so establish their independence of the local bureaucracy. For someone so closely connected to a group of poets who prize metaphor, the language is interestingly straightforward (the comparison of the insects to detachable earrings, for instance, unforced and immediately convincing), and the lines that evoke a sense of the relation between the butterflies and their hosts derive most of their charm from direct observation.

Throughout this short book the phrases that leap from the page — "a radio thinking aloud", say — gain most pressure from a preoccupation with English, and it seems unnecessary to point

some other language for which an equivalence has had to be found. We may enjoy the pleasure Reid takes in

bottles with cracked  
necks, and the jar that dribbles  
its glaze like a sloppily fed baby

or the angel that gives a jolt to the nervous system so intense that it dims the electric lights, while the poems of a dead friend are being read. There is a fine relish in Reid's account of his imagined South, in which he staggers, "amazed / at the dazzle and torpor of Paradise". Yet what, finally, has this to do with the blacker ingenuities and more necessary games of a Hobbes or a Herbert? Has anything been appropriated of any weight, or is Reid simply playing with echoes and reverberations without offering any further significant comment? Since Reid is undoubtedly aware of these risks, there must be psychological gains in the disguise he has adopted.

Perhaps the most important clue lies in his second shift, which is to enter a female consciousness. It is possible, without falling into any kind of sexist trap, to speak of Reid's personality manifest in earlier poems, as quintessentially feminine. In "Son of Memory" his suspicion that the Muse of History is a male, deeply uneasy in the Adamic drapery of the daughters of Memory, and preferring to go about his business in the "manly cloak of a suit of armour", is an ironic tribute to his powers of the

feminist vision. And perhaps it offers a clue to the nature of the whole enterprise: a woman falling into the vulgarity of envying the power of those who live out his Central European fantasy, Reid yearns for...

some deep knowledge  
of the different kinds of eau de vie  
of the magic language of turning  
of mince, flowers, childhood.

This would be a knowledge like the reader's of one of Chekhov's three sisters, Katerina, dreaming of significance. Reid is dreaming of a freedom from triviality. Perhaps because we sense as much, it is possible to overlook the air of a gentlemanly look aimed directly at the poetry establishment. Christopher Reid is too good a poet to need the affirmation of so cosy a group.

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## The parish goes to vote

Colin Jones

P. M. JONES  
Politics and Rural Society: The southern Massif Central, c. 1750-1850  
375pp. Cambridge University Press. £30.  
0521 257972

By 1893, the notoriously cleric-ridden departments of the southern reaches of the Massif Central were voting overwhelmingly for the more or less anti-clerical parties of the Third Republic. The peasantry here retained much of its famed social deference, piety and attachment to the Church, but now voted on lines which, it seemed, would gain them more in the way of material inducements than an intractable hostility to the régime. As *prises de conscience* go, this tactical voting did not appear to amount to very much, support for the Republic remaining highly conditional. The Republic was, in the eyes of the rural majority, "une bonne vache à lait dont il faut tirer tout ce qu'on peut, quitte à lui donner le coup de pied à la première occasion". Limited as it was, however, the change in voting patterns, which was only achieved in the wake of intense electrifying activity in the 1880s, is viewed by P. M. Jones in this richly documented and lucidly written account as marking a major transformation in peasant political mentalities, bringing the region into the national polity.

Dr Jones's contribution to the burgeoning literature on the "modernization" of nineteenth-century rural France is particularly welcome in that it offers a long-term view, stretching well back into the *ancien régime* of a region – unlike the Basque Province of Maurice Agulhon's paradigmatic work on "la République au village" – which was economically backward and profoundly conservative. Everything came late or never in the southern Massif: oaks, roads, railways, proletarianization (landowning on these tough slopes was "a constant rather than a variable"), population growth (the demographic vitality of *ancien régime* France only hit the region from the early nineteenth century) and urbanization (one Prefect, noting the region's highly dispersed, non-nucleated settlement, compared it to Siberia). Moreover, the development of the national economy in the nineteenth century produced the paradoxical effect of intensifying the rural nature of the region, as cottage industry went into decline and as urban demands for agricultural produce grew apace. Only by the 1880s were railways, rural exodus and primary schooling in their very different ways signalling a transformation.

With the economic torpor which characterized the region for most of the nineteenth century went cultural inertia. Even the numerous temporary migrants who worked in Paris or the plains seemingly left home with "cultural armour-plating" which protected them against

exogenous influences, and the region stayed well off the beaten track of the main political ideologies. Politics seemed to affect it less than the infiltration of alien values than as the opportunity at critical moments – 1789, 1815, 1848, etc. – of settling age-old scores. It took a lot, seemingly, to raise the peasantry's political horizons above the parish pump, and it is to Jones's credit that he provides a particularly skilful and subtle account of the "dynamics of opinion formation" against an unprepossessing background where community values bulked larger than individual opinion. His demonstration of how the vicissitudes of voting arrangements affect political choices – the parishes voted en bloc, often accompanied by parish banners and a *service d'ordre* of local priests – is especially novel and enjoyable. It is more generous, too, than many recent historians of the peasantry to the Revolution of 1789, which he sees as providing an early laboratory in political consciousness-raising. A leitmotif of this study is the way in which the parish clergy – at first through hostility to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy introduced in 1790 – sharpened peasant political awareness. The electoral transformation in the 1880s becomes, in part, a tribute to, as well as an obituary for the clerical politics of the past. The idea of the clergy as their own political givers is an arresting one, which gives this sensitive study a striking pathos and resonance.

lacking among available biographies. This is pity, for Madame Roland's position among the Girondins is a subject worthy of further investigation, and the author has proved his qualities as a critical historian in his previous important work on eighteenth-century financial policy on the nature of the *ancien régime* nobility. Perhaps here he is too self-consciously writing for a "grand public", which prefers adulation to analysis: he seems content to rely heavily on Madame Roland's own diaries and those of her friends, and there is an uncomfortable gap between his approach to "Manon" that scarcely inspires confidence. Nor does his thought about the nature of the historical discipline in the preface, which descend to the level of whimsy and make-believe. Sutherland's almost 450 pages, gives Madame Roland more than a slighting mention. Her *Journal*, he suggests, "was more conducive to relaxed discussion and gossip than to planning concerted action", and this contributed to the political inefficacy of the Girondins as a group. The elegance, the lightness of touch, the relaxed geniality of her company, all are qualities which glow through Chausinand-Nogaret's prose. Manon Roland undoubtedly had great charm and influence within her political circle. But there is little in this study which would make one wish to query Sutherland's rather diametric judgment or to insist on a more imposing epitaph.

Where *Madame Roland* is aimed at a general readership, Jean-Claude Perrot and Stuart J. Woolf are writing with specialists in mind. Their *State and Statistics in France, 1789-1800* is a useful volume which brings together two distinguished essays on the flourishing of political information to France during the period of the Revolution and Empire. Of the two, Jean-Claude Perrot's is the more detailed; Stuart Woolf's is the more philosophical, but both make the sheer quantity and variety of statistical information produced at the command of governments in these years. The sense of official curiosity about its roots, of course, is the academy of the *ancien régime* and both authors rightly stress the continuities as much as the innovations. Nor is there much evidence that governments put the information they collected to any immediate administrative use. They just wanted the knowledge and reassurance that only hard facts and statistics could provide, and, happily for historians, the mental and municipal officials up and down the country were set to work on unprejudiced programmes of research and collation. The volume provides a valuable guide to the state of such research and supplies the historical French provinces. In particular, a splendid research tool.

## Medievalism for moderns

Eugene Vance

PETER DRONKE  
The Medieval Poet and His World  
490pp. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura.

Many medieval Latin writers had an oxaloid sense of their medium. They believed that written letters, though an invention of man, constituted an order whose elements corresponded to nothing less than the order of the cosmos as the creation of the divine mind. For the seventh-century Virgil of Toulouse, the letter resembles man because as we speak, it grows, like man, from a corporeal sound into a vessel of meaning; or again, because it has a material body, a soul (meaning) and a "contemplative" potential corresponding to *ratio*. The verb is like a sun that illuminates the sentence, or like a king without whom a people is powerless; the participle is born of the marriage of the noun and verb; and so on.

Some medieval writers believed that poetry is the best way into that medium. Peter Dronke reports that William of Conches, contesting Macrobius' remark that the fables of the poets belong in the nursery, interprets the "nursery" to be the schools of the poets and *autores*: "for as the bodies of infants in the cradle are nourished by milk", William wrote, "so minds are nurtured in the schools of poets".

Medieval Latin culture attracts its students for many reasons, including even the political: Ernst Robert Curtius turned to it as a humanist remedy for the "sclerosis" of German culture in pre-war nationalism. Dronke seems to be drawn to it quite simply because he admires its poetry – just as he loves medieval poetry writers in many of the nascent vernaculars of Europe.

A large part of Dronke's prolific scholarship is devoted to medieval Latin poetry and to the poetic doctrines which nurtured both it and vernacular poetry. His ninth and most recent book, *The Medieval Poet and His World*, is a collection of seventeen eloquent essays, all previously published in the years 1961-79, and all dealing with aspects of both Latin and vernacular poetics. Since the bulk of the writing was apparently done in the 1970s, the book does not lack coherence.

The title, though, is something of a misnomer, for it turns out that the medieval poet's "world" is refracted to Dronke mostly through poetry itself. Moreover, it is a world where beauty prevails. He instinctively shuns the abject, the scandalous, the violent, the putrid, the psychopathic and the scatological, in favour of what is harmonious and sublime. Thus, he is better at dealing with the legacy of the Song of Songs or with instances when poetry points beyond itself to the unseen (as in Dante's *Purgatorio*) than with the fabliaux, which seem quite lauded when he writes of them.

Access to this beautiful world lies not through history or literary theory but through a "literary judgment" that is primarily intuitive, yet well-informed by aesthetic doctrines expressed mainly in Latin culture itself. Moreover, for Dronke, the exercise of literary judgment is the study of discrete or "individual" poetic utterances whose semantics are always contextual and never reducible to types or abstract rules. A good example of his contextualism is to be found in his *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages*, where he assigns limits to the usefulness of Curtius's historical analysis of poets.

The historical analysis of poets can contribute usefully to the comprehension of individual works, but to what extent it can itself help to distinguish between the individual and the typical within the work is less certain – what if the individuality lies precisely in the way that the typical is used?

Dronke's custom of addressing a poem on its own terms allows him to pass naturally from Latin to vernacular writing or from the learned to the popular without subordinating the latter to the former. Thus, the postivistic game of tracing sources and influences, and the philologist's quest for origins, have prevailed over his personal vision of poetry as performance. The deeper he remains to the texture of individual poems, the more stunning his perceptions are: Dronke is a loving hunter of structural parallels, of semantic inflections, of sudden transi-

tions, and of subtle deepening in perspective. He favours lyrical poetry whose formal surface, integrity and compression accentuate the specific powers of the poetic word.

His aesthetic bias can also extend to the establishment of texts. For instance, his reading of "the modulation of three images" of "wind, dew and music" in the great lyric "Dum Diaoe vitrea", of the *Carmina Burana*, is not only a display of true critical sensitivity, but also the ground for his argument that the extant text of that poem is not a spurious hybrid (as others have argued), but a highly controlled and harmonious whole.

Dronke is a compelling apologist for poetry as an art of congruency, harmony, wholeness, transparency, symmetry, felicity, presence and epiphany. Poetic metaphors he writes of as "beams of integrity". His own writing teems with hyperbolic praise of his material, much of which is about love. Indeed there is something mimetic about his captivation by a poetics where eros has become an eros of the word. Dronke cuts from the rhetoricians and poets many doctrines propitious to his own presuppositions as a reader; for instance, Geoffrey of Vinsauf's warning that "If any part should fit badly, the whole ordered conception will be shamed by that part", or Dante's theories in the *De vulgari eloquentia* of "construction" as the "absolute oneness of form and content". In an earlier book, *Fabula: Explorations into the uses of myth in medieval Platonism*, he has shown how medieval Platonic cosmologies vindicated the imagination as a vehicle of understanding that is neither scandalous nor mendacious. It is not surprising that in an essay here he should enlist Coleridge on the imagination to reinforce his own convictions about the organic integrity of poetry.

Clearly, Dronke's position as a modern reader of medieval poems is rooted as much in Romantic "organicism" and its afterlife in modern formalism as in medieval doctrines.

## Moralistic impostures

D. D. R. Owen

RONALD N. WALPOLE (Editor)  
Le Turpin français, dit le Turpin I  
250pp. University of Toronto Press. £30.  
082025366

It is astonishing that the anonymous writer of the Latin *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* was allowed to get away with his imposture. He was on easy terms with, and for part of his account of Charlemagne's Spanish campaign, plagiarized, the *Song of Roland*, which had been inspiring writers and warriors for several decades by the time of his intervention towards the middle of the twelfth century. In the *Song* his contemporaries were assured that immediately before his own death Roland had mourned that of the mangled Archbishop

He is never polemical, pedantic or tendentious, and because he is so good at what he does, one can hardly reproach him for picking out those medieval claims for poetry that support his own convictions.

However, the inroads made by contemporary schools of literary criticism and by other modern disciplines – anthropology, history, philosophy, psychoanalysis, semiotics – have diversified the critical paradigms of modern medievalism. Several distinct approaches to medieval literature are now emerging, all capable of dealing closely with individual poems. These, I would suggest, are the philosophical, which asks how medieval theories of being and cognition manifest themselves in poetic constructs; the cultural, which questions the social and political functions of writing and of poetry as a class activity; the psychoanalytical, which studies models of consciousness expressed in the languages of belief and desire; and the semiotic, or what may also be called "discourse analysis", which studies modes of signification in the light of medieval semantic theory. Dronke's approach is closest to the latter.

This renewal and sharpening of alternatives explains the extraordinary revival of interest in medieval culture today. Indeed, medievalism can often temper the parochialism of modern critics, many of whom have never seriously read a single medieval text, much less confronted a medieval idea. The Derridean notion of "practice" of difference is hardly a modern whim: Augustine's (Plotinian) view of the world (and of the text) as the "region of difference" (*regio dissimilitudinis*) haunts medieval aesthetics in many poignant ways, and is one basis (among others) for processes of negation and for inscriptions of a loss of presence in many different areas of medieval consciousness – the genealogical, the political, the spiritual, the erotic and, what is important for poetry, the linguistic and textual ("the letter kills...").

Since Dronke keeps his distance from modern critical thought (as a glance at his index will show) he is hardly inclined to dwell on those moments when the poets allow us to glimpse their discourse as mendacious, disjunctive, labyrinthine, sophistical, subversive, idiosyncratic, centrifugal, alienating – or even (as in Chaucer's *Troilus*), castrating. Though Dronke is not a polemical critic, he might be dismayed by the proposition that the *Chanson de Roland* is not only a magnificent tragedy of feudal ideals, but a poem whose second half leaves us with a dark perception that the language of this supreme "Carolingian" epic is no longer, as the poet Jean Bodin wished it to be, "true with each day" (*voir chacun jour apparent*), but painfully inadequate in the complexities of a changed world; a world of loss, absence and (Augustinian) difference. Nor would Dronke be likely to probe those psychic forces which determine the *Tristan* story as a relentless trajectory towards death us the double of love. Nor that anything he writes suggests that he is opposed to the pluralism of modern medievalism.

On the other hand, because Dronke himself is a well-informed, intelligent and close reader of poems, his criticism should appeal even to the most secularist of contemporary medievalists. He is a fine critic and an exemplary commentator. If one senses an occasional malaise when he deals with "theoretical" issues (such as the question of the origins of the fabliau) or a lack of resourcefulness in dealing with the fascinating historical link between poetry and the court of Henry II, what he goes on to say about the fabliaux themselves, and especially about the poetry of Peter of Blois, is often cogent and profound. And when he writes about Dante, there is an appropriate meeting of minds: of the mind of a fine modern reader of medieval poems with that of a supreme poet whose medieval "world" has been supremely poetized.

Turpin, his companion in the rearward, who was subsequently lamented and prepared for burial by the Emperor himself. How brazen, then, to assert not only that the gallant prelate had been safe with Charles, far from the slaughter of Roncevaux, all the time, but that most of his chronicle consists of the memoirs of Turpin himself. More remarkable still, "his claim was so widely credited that it inspired most of the 'historical' accounts of the campaign and its portrayal in art throughout the rest of the Middle Ages."

Part of the reason for the *Chronicle's* success lies in the fact that it contains much more moralistic Christian propaganda than the *Song*, on the one hand glorifying the shrine of St James of Compostela ("Turpin" claims to have attended its dedication) and on the other, Ronald N. Walpole believes, strengthening the links between the Carolingian legend and the

Abbey of St Denis. Even Roland engages in the theological disputation with a Saracen champion before dispatching him. So there was clerical interest in its wide diffusion. It had, too, the advantage of being in prose at a time when verse was coming more and more to be associated with untrustworthy fictions. In prose it was widely disseminated in the French vernacular from about 1200; and it is one of these French translations (not the earliest, though dating is difficult) that is edited in *Le Turpin français, dit le Turpin I* by the acknowledged expert in the field, to whom we already owe the publication of the *Turpin II*.

Having grappled elsewhere with the complex relationships between the nine manuscripts preserving *Turpin I*, Walpole here short-circuits the detailed arguments, but reproduces his proposed stemma and justifies his choice of the base text. Fully half the volume is devoted to the presentation of extensive variants, modifications and additions to that text. This meticulously presented array of critical material, quite apart from the useful notes and glossary, offers two related benefits. It contributes to our understanding of the mutations to which the prose material was subjected by the prejudices, inattentions and plain whims of the scribes or self-appointed redactors. In doing so it also serves as a reminder of the distortions which history (or in this case pseudo-history) suffered at the hands of its medieval transmitters as they wishfully or sometimes subconsciously sought to re-create the past in the image of their own world.

From the historical event first recorded by Einhard, the story of Charles's campaign ("L'estoire d'Espaigne" as this text calls it) has here achieved its ultimate medieval dimension. For Einhard it was a recent, unfortunate episode to be played down. Three centuries later the poet of the *Song* saw in it a subject for celebration: the heroic feudal ideal triumphing over military disaster. Unstrutted by military braggadocio, the promulgators of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* were concerned above all to exploit its new-found dialectic elements for purposes of religious propaganda, an aspect highlighted by Professor Walpole in his excellent edition.

NICHOLAS MURRAY

If a new textbook on a period as complex as that of the French Revolution is to leave any mark on the literature of the subject, it must have a guiding principle which marks it out from its competitors. D. M. G. Sutherland knows this as well as anyone, and he states at the outset that he believes the time is ripe for a new approach to the Revolution, one which takes account of the many local and regional studies which have appeared during the past twenty years. The outcome of his labours is his new work of synthesis, *France, 1789-1815: Revolution and counter-revolution*. He distances himself from the classic Marxist approach of Lefebvre and Soboul, in which "the history of the French Revolution is the history of the consolidation of the bourgeoisie". The study of what happened in specific towns and regions, Sutherland believes, makes such a crude Marxist untenable. But equally, those critical of Marxism have either failed to put any alternative structure in its place – like Alfred Cobban – or have concentrated their attacks on the explanation of the outbreak of Revolution rather than on the nature of the Revolutionary experience. Hence the student of the period risks being faced with two quite different literatures – that of general surveys which talk in predominantly class terms; and that of local studies, which may present an image of revolution virtually unrecognizable to those weaned on the general texts.

The novelty of Sutherland's approach lies largely in his insistence that events outside

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D. M. G. SUTHERLAND  
France, 1789-1815: Revolution and counter-revolution  
493pp. Collins. £14.95 (paperback, Fontana, £5.95).

JOHN A. LYNN  
The Bayonets of the Republic: Motivation and tactics in the army of revolutionary France, 1791-94  
356pp. University of Illinois Press; distributed by Harper and Row. £27.50.

GUY CHAUSINAND-NOGARET  
Madame Roland: Une femme en révolution  
357pp. Paris: Seuil, 89fr.  
0202089343

JEAN-CLAUDE PERROT and STUART J. WOOLF  
State and Statistics in France, 1789-1815  
205pp. Harwood Academic Publishers, PO Box 786, Cooper Station, New York, NY 10266. \$39.  
02718602016

Paris be given a substantial, even predominant, role. In contrast to those political historians who have seen the Revolution as a series of laws and reforms, decrees and ideologies, he examines change from below – from the standpoint of the provincial *bourgeoisie* or *maître*, from the village square or the peasant holding. Issues like the sale of *biens nationaux* and decentralization are seen from the consumer's angle; and the logic behind Revolutionary innovation was rarely as compelling in the village bar as it might seem in the Jacobin Club. The result is a picture of the Revolution that is at one and the same time familiar and greatly changed. The popular Revolution of 1789 contains, for instance, a graphic description of the Fall of the Bastille. But Sutherland's 1789 focuses equally on the collapse of authority in the countryside and on the beginnings of municipal autonomy in the cities of provincial France. His Revolution is arranged to suit the timetable of Dijon or Le Havre as much as that of the capital: the Terror is seen as being as effective as its local agents, the Directory dominated by brigandage and provincial lawlessness.

Localism, indeed, comes almost to replace class identity as a motor force of change. Sutherland's central argument is that it is the forces unleashed by the provinces which dictated the pace and pattern of the Revolution at national level, with the history of the period seen in terms of a struggle between the forces of revolution and those of counter-revolution, a struggle often paralleled by that between the centre and the periphery. And while it is true that he argues this case more confidently for the 1790s than for the later period – from around Year VI his treatment becomes more conventional, with Napoleon especially relating his place at the centre of the stage – this change of emphasis reflects a very real change in the nature and efficiency of central government. Even during the Empire it is noticeable that Sutherland is not going to submit to centralism without a fight. The lesson of the Napoleonic years, he writes, is that "in the end the vast weight of ancient peasant France imposed itself on the government, at the expense of many of the ideas of 1789". Peasant resistance to change imposed from Paris – the very stuff of rural counter-revolution in the Vendée or in Brittany – is given the last and most telling word.

Social historians of the period will welcome Sutherland's emphasis, especially since the recent assault on the Marxist interpretation has tended to suggest a rampant political view of 1789. But what has been sacrificed in his interpretation? Ideology certainly loses out. The Enlightenment gets scarcely a nod, and any

idea of a country divided into opposing ideological factions is cast aside. In the same way politics is de-throned from its central position, if by politics we mean the high politics of the Convention and the Jacobin Club. The great men of the Revolution play a more subdued role: even Robespierre is not allowed to shape the events around him at will. The popular masses are left at the centre of the Revolutionary stage, though for Sutherland, as befits a student of the Breton peasantry, the masses are not confined to the *sans-culottes* of the Paris sections. The masses need not be progressist, or even revolutionary; they are as likely to be found in the *hockeys* of the counter-revolutionary West or in the military battalions of Jourdan or Kellermann.

For Sutherland, war plays a vital part in forming Revolutionary politics and mentalities. It is therefore natural that the conduct of that war should become an important subject for study in its own right. John Lynn's new book, *The Bayonets of the Republic*, is a mixture of social and political history and tactical analysis. The empirical history is of the Armée du Nord between 1791 and 1794, when it became merged into the Sambre-et-Meuse; the tactical study draws upon military manuals both of the eighteenth century and of more recent periods, and cites the lessons to be drawn from Vietnam with the same alacrity as those that were drawn from Valmy and Jemappes. Lynn's expressed aim is to explain the Army's undoubted battle-effectiveness by Year II. He discusses the structure of the regiments and the status of the individual soldier – here he makes a good use of generals' reports and correspondence as well as of existing secondary works by Sam Scott and Jean-Paul Bertaud. His analysis is lively and highly readable, if occasionally over-written, and he is most effective in his discussion of politicization and citizenship in the ranks of the military. For the historian the sections of the book devoted to tactics and battle-formations may seem less crucial, and the constant references to "primary group cohesion" and to rather incongruous "buddy relationships" may begin to jar. But Lynn's central thesis stands – that for all the inevitable teething problems, the indiscipline, desertion and pillage which marked the early experiments in military democracy, the Armée du Nord was moulded into an effective fighting force by a mixture of political exhilaration and simple professionalism.

In contrast, Guy Chausinand-Nogaret's *Madame Roland: Une femme en révolution* adds little that is really significant to our understanding of the period. It is too gossipy, too reverent and deferential to its subject, to provide a critical assessment of the kind that is







